

LOVE'S LABOR WON.

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CHAPTER FIRST.

THE IMPROVISATRICE.

Hers was the spell o'er hearts
That only genius gives,
The mother of the sister Arts,
Where all their beauty lives.

VARIED FROM CAMPBELL.

"BEAUTIFUL."

"Glorious."

"Celestial!"

Such were the exclamations murmured through the room, in low, but earnest tones.

"So fair and dark a creature I have never seen," said the French ambassador.

"The rarest and finest features of the blonde and the brunette combined; look at her hair and brow!—it is as if the purple lustre of Italia's vines lay upon the snow of Switzerland's Alps," said a young English gentleman, of some twenty years of age, and from whom the air of the university had scarcely yet fallen.

"You are too enthusiastic, Lord William," gravely observed an elderly man, in the dress of a clergyman of the Church of England.

"Too enthusiastic, sir! ah, now! do but see for yourself, if it be not profane to gaze at her. Is she not now—what is she? queenly? Pshaw! I was, when a boy, at Versailles with my father; I saw Marie Antoinette and the beautiful princesses of her train; but never, no, never have I seen beauty, and dignity, and grace like this. You have the honor of knowing the lady, sir?" he concluded, turning abruptly to a member of the French Legation, standing near him.

"Oh, yes, monsieur, I have that distinction," said the affable Parisian, with a bow and smile.

"And her name is——?"

"Ah! pardon me, monsieur—Mademoiselle Marguerite De Lancia."

"Oh! a countrywoman of your own."

"Excuse, monsieur—a Virginie"

"Ah, ha! Miss De Lancy, of Virginia," said the young Englishman, who having thus ascertained all that he wished to know, for the present, now, with the characteristic and irresponsible bluntness of his nature, turned his back upon the small Frenchman, and gave himself up

to the contemplation of the lady seated at the harp.

This conversation occurred in a scene and upon an occasion long-to-be-remembered—the scene was the saloon of the old Presidential mansion at Philadelphia—the occasion was that of Mrs. Washington's last reception, previous to the final retirement of Gen. Washington from office. The beauty, talent, fashion and celebrity of the "Republican Court" were present—heroes of the Revolutionary struggle—warriors, whose mighty swords had cleft asunder the yoke of a foreign despotism; sages, whose gigantic minds had framed the Constitution of the young Republic; men whose names were then, as now, of world-wide glory and time-enduring fame; foreign ministers and ambassadors, with their suites, all enthusiastic admirers, or politic flatterers of the glorious New Power that had arisen among the nations; wealthy, aristocratic, or otherwise distinguished tourists, whom the fame of the young commonwealth, and the glory of her Father had attracted to her shores; women also, whose beauty, grace and genius so dazzled the perceptions of even these late *habitués* of European courts, that they avowed themselves unable to decide whether were the sons of Columbia the braver, or her daughters the fairer!

And through them all, but greater than all, moved the Chief, arrayed simply, as a private gentleman, but wearing on his noble brow that royalty no crown could give.

But who is she, that even in this company of splendid magnificence, upon this occasion of supreme interest, can for an hour become the magnet of all eyes and ears?

Marguerite De Lancia was the only child of a Provencal gentleman and a Virginia lady, and combined in her person and in her character all the strongest attributes of the northern and the southern races; blending the passions, genius and enthusiasm of the one, with the intellectual power, pride and independence of the other; and contrasting in her person the luxuriant purplish black hair and glorious eyes of the Romaic nations, with the fair, clear complexion and roseate bloom of the Saxon. Gifted above most women

by nature, she was also favored beyond most ladies by fortune. Having lost her mother, in the tender age of childhood, she was reared and educated by her father, a gentleman of the most accomplished cultivation. He imbued the mind of Marguerite with all the purest and loftiest sentiments of liberty and humanity, that in his country somewhat redeemed the wickedness of the French Revolution. Monsieur De Lancie, dying when his daughter was but eighteen years of age, made her his sole heiress, and also, in accordance with his own liberal and independent principles, and his confidence in Marguerite's character and strength of mind, he left her the irresponsible mistress of her own property and person. Marguerite was not free from grave faults. A beautiful, gifted and idolized girl left with the unrestrained disposal of her time and her ample fortune, it was impossible but that she must have become somewhat spoiled. Her defects exhibited themselves in excessive personal pride and extreme freedom of thought and speech, and some irradicable prejudices which she took no trouble to conceal. The worshipped of many suitors, she had remained, up to the age of twenty-two, with her hand unengaged and her heart untouched. Several American women had about this time married foreign noblemen: and those who envied this superb woman, averred that the splendid Marguerite only waited for a coronet.

When at home Miss De Lancie resided either at her elegant town house in the old city of Winchester, or upon one of her two plantations, situate, the upper among the wildest and most beautiful hills of the Blue Ridge, and the lower, upon the banks of the broad Potomac, where she reigned mistress of her land and people, "queen o'er herself."

Marguerite was at present in Philadelphia, on a visit to her friend Miss Compton, whose father occupied a "high official station" in the administration. This was Miss De Lancie's first appearance in Philadelphia society. And now that she was there, Marguerite, with the constitutional enthusiasm of her nature, forgot herself in the deep interest of this assembly, where the father of his country met for the last time, socially, her sons and daughters.

In accordance with the elegant ease that characterized Mrs. Washington's drawing-rooms, several ladies of distinguished musical taste and talent had varied the entertainment of the evening by singing to the accompaniment of the harp, or piano, the National odes and popular songs of that day.

Then ensued a short interval, at the close of

which Miss De Lancie permitted herself to be led to the harp by Col. Compton. She was a stranger to most persons in that saloon, and it was simply her appearance as she passed and took her place at the harp, that had elicited that restrained burst of admiration with which this chapter opens.

She was indeed a woman of superb beauty, which never shone with richer lustre than upon this occasion, that I present her to the reader.

Her figure was rather above the medium height; but elegantly proportioned. The stately head arose from a smoothly rounded neck, whose every curve and bend was the very perfection of grace and dignity; lustrous black hair, with brilliant purple lights like the sheen on the wing of some Oriental bird, was rolled back from a queenly forehead, and turned over a jeweled comb in a luxuriant fall of ringlets at the back of her head; black eye-brows distinctly drawn, and delicately tapering toward the points, were arched above rich, deep eyes of purplish black, that languished or glowed, melted or flashed from beneath their long lashes with every change of mood; and all harmonized beautifully with a pure, rich complexion, where the clear crimson of the cheeks blended softly into the pearly whiteness of the blue veined temples and broad forehead, while the full curved lips glowed with the deepest, brightest flush of the ruby. She was arrayed in a royal purple velvet robe, open over a richly embroidered white satin skirt; her neck and arms were veiled with fine point lace; and a single diamond star lighted up the midnight of her hair.

Having seated herself at the harp and essayed its strings, she paused, and seemingly unconscious of the many eyes rivetted upon her, she raised her head, and gazing into the far off distance, threw her white arm across the instrument, and swept its chords in a deep, soul-thrilling prelude—not to a national ode or popular song, but to a spirit-stirring, glorious improvisation! This prelude seemed a musical paraphrase of the great national struggle and victory. She struck a few deep, solitary notes, and then swept the harp in a low, mournful strain, like the first strokes of tyranny, followed by the earliest murmurs of discontent; then the music, with intervals of monotone, arose in fitful gusts like the occasional skirmishes that heralded the Revolution; then the calm was lost in general storm and devastation—the report of musketry, the tramp of steeds, the clashing of swords, the thunder of artillery, the fall of walls, the cries of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the shouts of victory, were not only heard, but

seen and felt in that magnificent tempest of harmony.

Then the voice of the improvisatrice arose. Her subject was the retiring chief. I cannot hope to give any idea of the splendor of that improvisation—as easily might I catch and fix with pen, or pencil, the magnificent life of an equinoctial storm, the reverberation of its thunder, the conflagration of its lightning! Possessed of Apollo, the light glowed upon her cheeks, irradiated her brow, and streamed, as it were, in visible living rays from her glorious eyes! The whole power of the god was upon the woman, and the whole soul of the woman in her theme. There was not a word spoken, there was scarcely a breath drawn in that room. She finished amid a charmed silence that lasted until Col. Compton appeared and broke the spell by leading her from the harp.

Then arose low murmurs of enthusiastic admiration, restrained only by the deep respect due to the chief personage in that assembly.

"La Marguerite des Marguerites!" said the gallant French attache.

"A Corinne! I must know her, sir. Will you do me the honor to present me?" inquired the English student, turning again to the Frenchman.

"Lord William!" interrupted the clerical companion, with an air of caution and admonition.

"Well, Mr. Murray! well! did not my father desire that I should make the acquaintance of all distinguished Americans?—and surely this lady must be one of their number?"

"Humph," said the clergyman, stroking his chin, "the marquis did not, probably, include distinguished actresses, Lord William."

"Actresses! have you judgment, Mr. Murray? Do but look with what majesty she speaks and moves!"

"So I have heard does Mrs. Siddons. Let us withdraw, Lord William."

"Not yet, if you please, sir! I must first pay my respects to this lady. Will you favor me, monsieur?"

"Pardon! I will make you known to Col. Compton, who will present you to the lady under his charge," said the Frenchman, bowing, and leading the way, while the clergyman left behind only vented his dissatisfaction in a few emphatic grunts.

"Miss De Lancie, permit me to present to you Lord William Daw, of England," said Col. Compton, leading the youthful foreigner before the lady.

Miss De Lancie bowed and half arose. She

received the young gentleman coldly, or rather absently, and to all that he advanced she replied abstractedly, for she had not yet freed herself from the trance that had lately bound her.

Nevertheless, Lord William found "grace and favor" in everything the enchantress said or did. He lingered near her, until at last, with a congee of dismissal to her boyish admirer, she arose and signified her wish to retire from the saloon.

The next day but one, was a memorable day in Philadelphia. It was the occasion of the public and final farewell of George Washington and the inauguration of his successor. From an early hour the city was thronged with visitors, who came, not so much to witness the instalment of the new, as to take a tearful last look at the deeply venerated, retiring President.

The profound public interest, however, did not prevent Lord William Daw from pursuing a quite private one. At an hour as early as the laxest etiquette would permit, he paid his respects to Miss De Lancie at the house of Col. Compton, and procured himself to be invited by his host to join their party in witnessing the interesting ceremonies at the Hall of Representation.

The family, consisting of the colonel and Mrs. Compton and their daughter Cornelia, went in a handsome landeau, or open carriage.

Miss De Lancie rode a magnificent black charger, that she managed with the ease of a cavalry officer, and with a grace that was only her own.

Lord William, on a horse placed at his service by Col. Compton, rode ever at her bridle rein—and if he admired her as a gifted improvisatrice, he adored her as an accomplished equestrienne, an excellence that of the two his young lordship was the best fitted to appreciate.

Afterward, in the Hall of Representation, he was ever at her side, nor could the august ceremonies, and the supreme interest of the scene passing before them, where the first President of the United States offered his valedictory, and the second President took his oath of office, win him for a moment from the contemplation of the queenly form and resplendent face of Marguerite De Lancie.

When the rites were all over, and their party had extricated themselves from the outrushing crowd, who were crushing each other nearly to death in their eagerness to behold the last of the retiring chief; when they had seen Washington enter his carriage and drive homeward; in fine, when at last they reached their own door, Lord William Daw manifested so little incontinence to take leave, and even betrayed so great a desire to remain, that nothing was left Col. Compton

but to invite the enamored boy to stay and dine, an invitation that was unhesitatingly accepted.

Dinner over, and lights brought into the drawing-room, and Lord William Daw still lingering!

"Unquestionably, this young man, though a scion of nobility, is ignorant or regardless of the usages of good society," said Col. Compton to himself. Then addressing the visitor, he said, "The ladies, sir, are going, this evening, to the new theatre, to see Fennel and Mrs. Whitlock in *Romeo and Juliet*. Will it please you to accompany us?"

"Most happy to do so," replied the youth, with an ingenuous blush and smile at what he must have considered a slight departure from the formal manners of the day, even while unable to resist the temptation and tear himself away.

In a few moments the carriage was at the door, and the ladies ready.

Miss Compton and Miss De Lancie, Col. Compton and Lord William Daw filled the carriage, as well as they afterward filled the box at the theatre.

The play had already commenced when they entered, and the scene in progress was that of the ball at old Capulet's house. It seemed to confine the attention of the audience; but as for Lord William Daw, the mimic life upon the stage had no more power than had had the real drama of the morning to draw his attention from the magnificent Marguerite. He spoke but little; spell-bound, his eyes never left her, except when in turning her regal head her eyes encountered his—when, blushing like a detected school boy, he would avert his face. So, for him, the play passed like a dream; nor did he know it was over until the general rising of the company informed him.

Every one was enthusiastic. Col. Compton, who had been in London in an official capacity, and had seen Mrs. Siddons, averred it as his opinion that her sister, Mrs. Whitlock, was in every respect the equal of the great tragedienne. All seemed delighted with the performance they had just witnessed, excepting only Lord William Daw, who had seen nothing of it, and Marguerite De Lancie who seemed perfectly indifferent.

"What is your opinion, Miss De Lancie?" inquired the youth, by way of relieving the awkwardness of his own silence.

"About what?" asked Marguerite, abstractedly.

"Ahem!—about—Shakspeare and—this performance."

"Oh! Can I be interested in anything of this kind, after what we have witnessed in

the State House to-day? Least of all in this thing?"

"This thing?—what, Marguerite, do you not worship Shakspeare and Mrs. Whitlock then?" exclaimed Cornelia Compton.

"Mrs. Whitlock? I do not know yet; let me see her in some other character. Shakspeare? Yes! but not traditionally, imitatively, blindly, wholly, as most of you worship, or profess to worship him; I admire his tragedies of *Lear*, *Richard the Third*, *Macbeth*, and perhaps one or two others; but this *Romeo and Juliet*, this love-sick boy and puling girl—bah! bah! let's go home."

"That's the way with Marguerite! Now I should not have dared to risk my reputation for intelligence by uttering that sentiment," said Cornelia Compton.

"Never fear, child! naught is never in danger," observed Col. Compton, with good-humored, though severe raillery.

While Lord William Daw, with the morbid and sensitive egotism of a lover, inquired of himself. Does she intend that remark for me? Does she look upon me only in the light of a love-sick boy? Do I only disgust her then? Thus tormenting himself until their party had entered the carriage, and driven back once more to Col. Compton's hospitable mansion, and where his host, inwardly laughing, pressed him to come in and take a bed and breakfast.

But the youth, doubtful of the colonel's seriousness, piqued at his innamorata's scornfulness, and ashamed of his own devotedness, declined the invitation, bowed his adieus and was about to retire, when Col. Compton placed his carriage and servants at Lord William's disposal, and besought him to permit them to set him down at his own hotel, a service that the young gentleman with some hesitation accepted.

In a few days from this, Gen. Washington left Philadelphia for Mount Vernon. And Col. Compton, who went out of office with his chief, broke up his establishment in Philadelphia, and with his family set out for his home in Virginia.

CHAPTER SECOND.

"THE LOVE CHASE."

—When shines the sun aslant,
The sun may shine and we be cold;
Oh! listen loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,

Margaret, Margaret.

E. B. BROWNING.

COL. COMPTON, and his family, travelling at leisure in their private carriage, reached the Blue Ridge on the fifth, and Winchester on the

seventh day of their journey, and went immediately to the fine old family mansion on the suburbs of the old town, which was comfortably prepared for the occupancy of the proprietor.

Miss De Lancie's elegant house on Loudoun street, under the charge of an exemplary matron, was also ready for the reception of its mistress; but Marguerite yielded to the solicitations of her friend Cornelia, and remained her guest for the present.

Compton Lodge was somewhat older than the town; it was a substantial building of grey sandstone, situated in a fine park shaded with great forest trees, and enclosed by a stone wall; it had once been a famous hunting seat, where Lord Fairfax, Gen. Morgan, Major Helphinstine, and other votaries of St. Hubert, "most did congregate;" and even now, it was rather noted for its superior breed of hounds and horses, and for the great foxhunts that were there got up.

Marguerite De Lancie liked the old place upon all these accounts, and sometimes when the hunting company was very select, she did not hesitate to join their sylvan sports: and scarcely a hunter there, even old Lord Fairfax himself, who still in his age, pursued with ever youthful enthusiasm, the pleasures of the chase—acquitted himself better than did this Diana.

But now in March, the hunting season was over, and if Marguerite De Lancie preferred Compton Lodge to her own house, it was because, after a long winter in Philadelphia—with the monotony of straight streets and red brick walls, and the weariness of crowded rooms—the umbragous shade of forest trees, the silence and the solitude of nature, with the company of her sole bosom friend, was most welcome.

The second morning after their settlement at home, Col. Compton's family were seated around the breakfast table, discussing their coffee, buckwheat cakes, and broiled venison.

Marguerite's attention was divided between the conversation at the table, and the view from the two open windows before her, where rolling waves of green hills, dappled over with the white and pink blossoms of peach and cherry trees, now in full bloom, wooed and refreshed the eye.

Col. Compton was sipping his coffee and looking over the "Winchester Republican," when suddenly he set down his cup, and broke into a loud laugh.

All looked up.

"Well, what is the matter?" inquired the

comfortable, motherly Mrs. Compton, without ceasing to butter her buckwheat.

"Oh! ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed the colonel.

"That is a very satisfactory reply, upon my word," commented the good woman, covering her cakes with honey.

"Don't—don't—that fellow will be the death of me!"

"Pleasant prospect to laugh at—that!" said his wife, twisting a luscious segment of her now well sauced buckwheat around the fork, preparatory to lifting it to her lips.

"Oh! do let us have the joke, if there is a joke, papa," pleaded Cornelia.

"Hem! well listen then!" said Col. Compton, reading.

"Distinguished arrival at McGuire's Hotel. Lord William Daw, the second son of the most noble, the Marquis of Eaglecliff, arrived at this place last evening. His lordship, accompanied by his tutor, the Reverend Henry Murray, is now on a tour of the United States, and visits Winchester for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the history and antiquities of the town!"

"That is exceedingly rich! that will quite do!" commented the colonel, laying down his newspaper, and turning with a comic expression toward Marguerite.

She was looking, by-the-bye, in high beauty, though her morning costume was more picturesque than elegant and more careless than either, and consisted simply of a dark chintz wrapper, over which, drawn closely around her shoulders, was a scarlet crape shawl, in fine contrast with the lustrous purple sheen of her black hair, one half of which was rolled in a careless mass at the nape of her neck, and the other drooped in rich ringlets down each side of her glowing, brilliant face.

"Hem! the antiquities of Winchester. I rather suspect it is the juvenilities that our young antiquarian is in chase of. Pray, Miss De Lancie, are you one of the antiquities?"

Marguerite curled her proud lip, erected her head and deigned no other reply.

"Unquestionably you also have conquered a title, Marguerite; when you are married, will you place me on your visiting list, Lady William Daw?" asked Cornelia Compton, with an arch glance.

"Cease," said Marguerite, peremptorily, "if I were to be married, which is utterly out of the question, it would not be to a school boy, let me assure you!"

"If you 'were to be married, which is utterly out of the question'—why you don't mean to tell

us, that you have foresworn matrimony, Marguerite? What do you intend to do? go into a cloister? Nonsense! in nine months you will marry," said Col. Compton.

"I marry? ha! ha! ha! there must first be a great improvement in the stock of men! Where is the unmarried son of Adam that I would deliberately vow to love, honor and obey? Why I should foreswear myself at the altar! Of all the single men I meet, the refined ones are weak and effeminate, and the strong ones are coarse and brutal! I'll none of them!" said Marguerite, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Thank you for making my husband a sort of presumptive exception," said Mrs. Compton.

"Will you call upon Lord William, this morning, papa?" inquired Miss Compton.

"My dear, believe me, the opportunity will scarcely be allowed. His lordship will not stand upon ceremony, I assure you. I expect to hear his name announced every moment."

And then, as in confirmation of Col. Compton's predictions, a servant entered and handed a card.

"Humph! where have you shown the gentleman, John?"

"Into the front drawing-room, sir."

"Nonsense—bring him in here."

The servant bowed and left the room.

"Such a free and easy visitor is not to be treated with formality. It is as I foresaw, ladies! Lord William Daw waits to pay his respects."

At that moment the door was once more opened, and the visitor announced.

Lord William Daw was a pleasing, wholesome, rather than a handsome, or distinguished-looking youth—with a short, stout figure, dark eyes and dark hair, a round rosy face, and white teeth, and an expression full of good-humor. Frank and easy among his friends, and disembarrassed among strangers to whom he was indifferent, he was yet timid and bashful as a girl in the presence of those whom he admired and honored; how much more so in the society of her—the beautiful and regal woman who had won his young heart's first and deepest worship. With all this the youngster possessed an indomitable will and power of perseverance, which, when aroused, few men, or things could withstand, and which his messmates at Oxford demoninated (your pardon super refined reader) an "English bull-dogish—hold-on-a-tiveness."

Lord William entered the breakfast-room, smiling and blushing between pleasure and embarrassment.

Col. Compton arose and advanced with a

cordial smile, and extended hand to welcome him. "Heartily glad to see you, sir! And here are Mrs. Compton, and my daughter, Cornelia, and my sweetheart, Marguerite, all waiting to shake hands with you."

The ladies arose, and Lord William, set at ease by this friendly greeting, paid his respects quite pleasingly.

"And now here is a chair and plate ready for you, for we hope that you have not breakfasted?" said the host.

Lord William had breakfasted; but would do so again. So he sat down at the table and spoiled a cup of coffee and a couple of buckwheat-cakes without deriving much benefit from either. A lively conversation ensued.

"The history and antiquities of Winchester, sir," said Col. Compton, with a half suppressed smile, in reply to a question of the young tourist. "The history is scarcely an hundred years old, and the antiquities consist mainly of some vestiges of the Shawanees' occupancy, and of Washington's March in the old French and Indian war! but the society, sir—the society representing the old respectability of the state may not be unworthy of your attention."

Lord William was sure that the society was most worthy of cultivation, nevertheless he would like to see those "vestiges" of which his host spoke.

"The ladies will take their usual morning ride within an hour or two, sir, and if you would like to attend them, they will take pleasure in showing you these monuments."

Lord William was again "most happy." And Col. Compton rang and ordered "Ali," to be brought out saddled for his lordship's use.

Within an hour after rising from the table, the riding party, consisting of Miss Compton, Miss De Lancie, Lord William Daw, and a groom in attendance, set forth. The lions of Winchester and its environs were soon exhausted, and the party returned to Compton Lodge in time for an early dinner.

Lord William Daw sojourned at Winchester, and became a daily visitor at Compton Lodge. Col. Compton, to break the exclusiveness of his visits to one house, introduced him at large among the gentry of the neighborhood. And numerous were the tea, card, and cotillion parties, got up for the sole purpose of entertaining the young scion of nobility, where it was only necessary to secure Miss De Lancie's presence, in order to ensure his lordship's dutiful attendance. Mr. Murray chafed and fretted at what he called his pupil's consummate infatuation, and talked of writing home to his

father, "the marquis." Marguerite scorned, or seemed to scorn, his lordship's pretensions, until one morning at breakfast, Col. Compton, half seriously, half jestingly, said,

"Sweetheart, you do not appear to join the respect universally shown to this young stranger.

"If," said Marguerite, "the young man had any distinguished personal excellence, I should not be backward in recognising it; but he is at best—Lord William Daw! Now who is Lord William Daw that I should bow down and worship him?"

"Lord William Daw, my dear, is the second son of the most noble, the Marquis of Eaglecliff, as you have already seen announced with a flourish of editorial trumpets, by our title-despising and very consistent democratic newspapers! He is heir presumptive, and as I learn from Mr. Murray, rather more than heir presumptive to his father's titles and estates; for it appears that the marquis had been twice married, and that his eldest son, by his first marchioness, derives a very feeble constitution from his mother; and it is not supposed that he will ever marry, or that he will survive his father; ergo, the hopes of the marquis for re-union rests with his second son, Lord William Daw; finis, that young nobleman's devoirs are not quite beneath the consideration even of a young lady of 'one of the first families of Virginia,' who is besides a belle, a blue, and a freeholder."

"Marguerite's future marchioness of Eaglecliffe, when you are married will your ladyship please to remember one poor Cornelia Compton, who lived in an old country house near Winchester, and once enjoyed your favor?" said Miss Compton.

Marguerite shrugged her shoulders with an expression, to the effect that the future succession of the Marquisate of Eaglecliffe was a matter of no moment to her.

But from this time, Marguerite's friends accused her, with uncertain justice, of showing somewhat more favor to the boyish lover, who might one day set the coronet of a marchioness upon her brow. When rallied upon this point, she would reply,

"There are certainly qualities which I do like in the young man; he is frank, simple and intelligent, and above all, is perfectly free from affectation, or pretension of any sort. Upon individual worth alone he is entitled to polite consideration."

There was, perhaps, a slight discrepancy between this opinion and one formerly delivered by Miss De Lancie; but let that pass; the last uttered judgment was probably the most righte-

ous, as growing out of a longer acquaintance, and longer experience in the merits of the subject.

Thus—while Lord William Daw prolonged his stay, and Mr. Murray fumed and fretted, the months of April, May and June went by. The first of July the family of Compton Lodge prepared to commence their summer tour among the watering, and other places of resort. They left Winchester about the seventh of the month.

Lord William Daw had not been invited to join their party, nor had he manifested inclination to obtrude himself upon their company, nor did he immediately follow in their train.

Nevertheless, a few days after their establishment at Berkeley Springs, Col. Compton read in the list of arrivals the names of "Lord William Daw, Rev. Henry Murray, and two servants."

Enough! The intimacy between the young nobleman and the Comptons were renewed at Berkeley. And soon the devotion of his youthful lordship to the beautiful and gifted Marguerite De Lancie was the theme of every tongue. To escape this notice, Marguerite withdrew from her party, and attended by her maid and footman, proceeded to join some acquaintances at Saratoga.

In vain! for unluckily Saratoga was as free to one traveller as to another, provided he could pay. And within the same week of Marguerite's settlement at her lodgings, all the manoeuvring mammas and marriageable daughters at the Springs, were thrown into a state of excitement and speculation, by the appearance among them of a young English nobleman, the heir presumptive of a marquisate.

But alas! it was soon perceived that Lord William had eyes, and ears, and heart for none other than the dazzling Miss De Lancie, "la Marguerite des Marguerites," as the French minister had called her.

Miss De Lancie's manner to her boyish worshipper was rather restraining and modifying, than repulsing or discouraging. And there were those who did not hesitate to accuse the proud and queenly Marguerite of finished coquetry.

To avoid this, the lady next joined a party of friends who were going to Niagara.

And of course it was obvious to all that the young English tourist, travelling only for improvement, must see the great Falls. Consequently, upon the day after Miss De Lancie's arrival at the Niagara Hotel, Lord William Daw led her in to dinner. And once more the "infatuation," as they chose to call it, of that young gentleman, became the favorite subject of gossip.

A few weeks spent at the Falls brought the

last of September, and Marguerite had promised, upon the first of October, to join her friends, the Comptons, in New York.

When Lord William Daw learned that she was soon to leave, half ashamed, perhaps, of forever following in the train of this disdainful beauty, he terminated his visit and preceded her eastward.

But when the stage-coach containing Miss De Lencie and her party drew up before the city hotel, Lord William, perhaps "to treat resolution," was the first person to step from the piazza and welcome her back.

Col. Compton and his family were only waiting for Marguerite's arrival to proceed southward. The next day but one was fixed for their departure. But the intervening morning, while the family were alone in their private parlor, Lord William Daw entered, looking grave and troubled.

Col. Compton arose in some anxiety to welcome him. When he had greeted the ladies and taken a seat, he said,

"I have come only to bid you good-bye, friends."

"I am sorry to hear that! but—you are not going far, or to remain long, I hope," said Col. Compton.

"I am going back to England, sir," replied the young man, with a sorrowful glance at Miss De Lencie, who seemed not quite unmoved.

"You astonish us, Lord William! Is this not a sudden resolution?" inquired Mrs. Compton.

"It is a sudden misfortune, my dear madam! Only this morning have I received a letter from my father, announcing the dangerous illness of my dear mother, and urging my instant return by the first homeward bound vessel. The Venture, Capt. Parke, sails for Liverpool at twelve to-day. I must be on board within two hours," replied the young man, in a mournful voice, turning the same deeply appealing glance toward Marguerite, whose color slightly paled.

"We are very sorry to lose you, Lord William, and still sorrier for the occasion of your leaving us," said Cornelia Compton. And so said all the party except—Miss De Lencie.

Lord William then arose to shake hands with his friends.

"I wish you a pleasant voyage and a pleasant arrival," said the colonel.

"And that you may find your dear mother quite restored to health," added Mrs. Compton.

"Oh! yes, indeed! I hope you will, and that you will soon visit us again," said Cornelia.

Marguerite said nothing.

"Have you no parting word for me, Miss De

Lencie?" inquired the young man, approaching her, and speaking in a low tone, and with a beseeching look.

Marguerite waved her hand. "A good voyage, my lord," she said.

He caught that hand and pressed it to his lips and heart, and after a long, deep gaze into her eyes he recollected himself, snatched his hat, bowed to the party and left the room.

Col. Compton, in the true spirit of kindness, arose and followed with the purpose of attending him to his ship.

"There's a coronet slipped through your fingers! Oh! Marguerite! Marguerite! if I had been in your place I should have secured that match! For, once married, they couldn't unmarry us, or bar the succession either, and so, in spite of all the reverend tutors and most noble papas in existence, I should in time have worn the coronet of a marchioness," said Miss Compton.

"And you would have done a very unprincipled thing, Cornelia," replied her mother, very gravely.

The blood rushed to Miss De Lencie's brow and crimsoned her face, as she arose in haste and withdrew to her own chamber.

"But, mamma, what do you suppose to have been the cause of Marguerite's rejection of Lord William's addresses?"

"I think that she had two reasons, either of which would have been all sufficient to govern her in declining the alliance. The first was, that Marguerite could never yield her affections to a man who has no other personal claims upon her esteem than the possession of a good heart and a fair share of intelligence; the second was, that Miss De Lencie had too high a sense of honor to bestow her hand on a young gentleman whose addresses were unsanctioned by his family."

The next day Col. Compton and his party set out for Philadelphia, where, upon his arrival, he received from Mr. Adams an official appointment that required his residence in the city of Richmond. And there in the course of the month he proceeded with his wife and daughter.

Miss De Lencie went down to pass the autumn at her own house in Winchester, where she remained until the first of December, when, according to promise, she went to Richmond to spend the winter with her friend Cornelia.

The Comptons had taken a very commodious house in a fashionable quarter of the city, and were in the habit of seeing a great deal of company. It was altogether a very brilliant winter in the new capital of Virginia. Quite a constellation of beauties and celebrities were there

assembled, but the star of the ascendant was the splendid Marguerite De Lancie. She was even more beautiful and dazzling than ever; and she entered with spirit into all the gaieties of the season. Tea and card parties, dances and masked balls followed each other in quick succession.

It was just before Christmas, that the belles of the metropolis were thrown into a state of delightful excitement by the issue of tickets from the Gubernatorial mansion, to a grand ball to be given on the ensuing New Year's Eve. Great was the flutter of preparation, and great the accession of business that flowed in upon the milliners, mantua-makers and jewelers.

Miss De Lancie and Miss Compton went out together to select their dresses for the occasion. I mention this expedition merely to give you a clue to what I sometimes suspected to be the true motive that inspired Cornelia Compton's rather selfish nature, with that caressing affection she displayed for Marguerite De Lancie. As for Marguerite's devotion to Cornelia, it was one of those mysteries or prophecies of the human heart, that only the future can explain. Upon this occasion, when Miss De Lancie ordered a rich, white brocade for her own dress, she selected a superb pink satin for her friend's; and when from the jeweler's Marguerite's hereditary diamonds came, set in a new form, they were accompanied by a pretty set of pearls to adorn the arms and bosom of Cornelia. Col. Compton knew nothing of his guest's costly presents to his daughter. With a gentleman's inexperience in such matters, he supposed that the hundred dollars he had given "Nellie" for her outfit had covered all the expenses. And when Mrs. Compton, who better knew the cost of pearls and brocade, made any objection, Marguerite silenced her by delicately intimating the possibility, that, under some circumstances, for instance, that of her being treated as a stranger, she might be capable of withdrawing to a boarding-house.

The eventful evening of the governor's ball arrived. The entertainment was by all conceded to be, what it should have been, the most splendid affair of the kind that had come off that season. A suite of four spacious rooms, superbly furnished, and adorned and brilliantly lighted, were thrown open. In the first, or dressing-room, the ladies left their cloaks and mantles, and re-arranged their toilets. In the second, Gov. Wood stood surrounded by the most distinguished civil and military officers of the state, and with his unequalled, dignified courtesy received his guests. In the third, and most spacious saloon, where the floor was covered

with canvass for dancing—the walls were lined with mirrors, and festooned with flowers that enriched the atmosphere with odoriferous perfume, while from a vine-covered balcony a military band filled all the air with music. Beyond the saloon, the last, or supper room, was elegantly set out. The supper-table was quite a marvel of taste in that department; just above it hung an immensely large chandelier, with quite a forest of pendant brilliants; its light fell and was flashed back from a sheet of mirror laid upon the centre of the table, and surrounded by a wreath of box-vines and violets, like a fairy lake within its banks of flowers; on the outer edge of this ring was a circle of grapes with their leaves and tendrils; while filling up the other space were exotic flowers and tropical fruits, and every variety of delicate refreshment in the most beautiful designs.

The rooms were filled before the late arrival of Col. Compton and his party. The ladies paused but a few minutes in the dressing-room to compose their toilets and draw on their gloves, and then they joined their escort at the inner door, went in, and were presented to Gov. Wood, and then passed onward to the dancing-saloon, where the music was sounding and the waltz moving with great vivacity.

The entree of our young ladies made quite a sensation. Both were dressed with exquisite taste.

Miss Compton wore a rich rose-colored satin robe, the short sleeves and low corsage of which was trimmed with fine lace, and the skirt open in front and looped away, with lilies of the valley, from a white sarsenet petticoat; a wreath of lilies crowned her brown hair, and a necklace and bracelets of pearls adorned her fair bosom and arms.

And as for Miss De Lancie, if ever her beauty, elegance and fascination reached a culminating point, it was upon this occasion. Though her dress was always perfect, it was not so much what she wore as her manner of wearing, that made her toilets so generally admired. Upon this evening her costume was as simple as it was elegant—a rich, white brocade robe open over a skirt of embroidered white satin, delicate falls of lace from the low bodice and flowing sleeves, and a light tiara of diamonds spanning like a rainbow the blackness of her hair.

As soon as the young ladies were seated they were surrounded. Miss Compton accepted an invitation to join the waltzers.

Miss De Lancie, who never waltzed, remained the centre of a charmed circle, formed of the most distinguished men present, until the waltzing was

over, and the quadrilles were called, when she accepted the hand of Col. Randolph for the first set, and yielded her seat to the wearied Cornelia, who was led thither by her partner to rest.

It chanced that Miss De Lencie was conducted to the head of the set, then forming, and that she stood at some little distance, immediately in front of, and facing the spot where Cornelia sat, so that the latter, while resting, could witness Marguerite. Now Cornelia really very much admired Miss De Lencie, and thought it appeared graceful and disinterested to laud the excellency of her friend, as she would not have done those of her sister had she possessed one. So now she tapped her partner's hand with her fan and said,

"Oh, do but look at Miss De Lencie! Is she not the most beautiful woman in the room?"

The gentleman followed the direction of her glance, where Marguerite was moving like a queen through the dance, and said,

"Miss De Lencie is certainly the most beautiful woman in the world—except one," with a glance, that the vanity of Nellie readily interpreted.

The eyes of both turned again upon Marguerite, who was now standing still in her place waiting for the next quadrille to be called. While they thus contemplated her in all her splendid beauty, set off by a toilet the most elegant in the room, Marguerite suddenly gave a violent start, shivered through all her frame and bent anxiously, to listen to some thing that was passing between two gentlemen, who were conversing in a low tone, near her; she grew paler and paler as she listened, and then with a stifled shriek, she fell to the floor, ere any one could spring to save her.

Cornelia flew to her friend's relief. She was already raised in the arms of Col. Randolph, and surrounded by ladies anxiously proffering, vinaigrettes and fans, while their partners rushed after glasses of water.

"Bring her into the dressing-room, at once, Randolph," said Col. Compton, as he joined the group.

Accordingly Miss De Lencie was conveyed thither, and laid upon a lounge, where every restorative at hand was used in succession, and in vain. More than an hour passed, while she lay in that death-like swoon; and when at last the efforts of an experienced physician were crowned with thus much success, that she opened her dimmed eyes and unclosed her blanched lips, it was only to utter one word—"Lost"—and to relapse into insensibility.

She was put into the carriage and conveyed

home, accompanied by her wondering friends and attended by the perplexed physician. She was immediately undressed and placed in bed, where she lay all night, vibrating between stupor and a low muttering delirium, in which some irreparable misfortune was indicated without being revealed—was it all delirium?

Next, a low, nervous fever supervened, and for six weeks Marguerite De Lencie swayed with a slow, pendulous uncertainty between life and death. The cause of her sudden indisposition remained a mystery. The few cautious inquiries made by Col. Compton resulted in nothing satisfactory. The two gentlemen whose conversation was supposed by Miss Compton to have occasioned Miss De Lencie's swoon, could not be identified—among the crowd then assembled at the governor's reception, and now dispersed all over the city—without urging investigation to an indiscreet extent.

"This is an inquiry that we cannot with propriety push, Nellie. We must await the issue of Miss De Lencie's illness. If she recovers she will doubtless explain," said Col. Compton.

With the opening of the spring, Marguerite De Lencie's life-powers rallied and convalescence declared it itself. In the first stages of her recovery, while yet body and mind were in that feeble state, which sometimes leaves the spiritual vision so clear, she lay one day, contemplating her friend who sat by her pillow, when suddenly she threw her arms around Cornelia's neck, lifted her eyes in an agony of supplication to her face, and cried,

"Oh, Nellie! do you truly love me? Oh, Nellie! love me! love me! least I go mad!"

In reply, Cornelia half smothered the invalid with caresses and kisses, and assurances of unchanging affection.

"Oh, Nellie, Nellie! there was one who on the eve of the bitterest trial, said to his chosen friends, 'All ye shall be offended because of me.' And his chief friend said, 'Although all should be offended yet will not I,' and furthermore declared, 'if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.' Oh! failing human strength! Oh! feeble human love! Nellie! you know how it ended. 'They all forsook him and fled.'"

"But I will be truer to my friend, than Peter to his master," replied Cornelia.

Marguerite drew the girl's face down closer to her own, gazed wistfully not into but upon those brilliant, superficial brown eyes, that because they had no depth repelled her confidence, and then with a deep groan and a mournful shake of the head, she released Nellie, and turned her own face to the wall. Did she deem Miss

Compton's friendship less profound than pretensions? I do not know; but from that time Miss De Lencie maintained upon one subject, at least, a stern reserve. And when, at last, directly, though most kindly and respectfully, questioned as to the origin of her agitation and swoon in the ball-room, she declared it to have been a symptom of approaching illness, and discouraged further interrogation.

Slowly Marguerite De Lencie regained her strength. It was the middle of March before she left her bed, and the first of April before she went out of the house.

One day, about this time, as the two friends were sitting together in Marguerite's chamber, Cornelia said,

"There is a circumstance that I think I ought to have told you before now, Marguerite. But we read of it only a few days after you were taken ill, and when you were not in a condition to be told of it."

"Well, what circumstance was that?" asked Miss De Lencie, indifferently.

"It was a fatal accident that happened to one of our friends. No, now! don't get alarmed—it was to no particular friend," said Cornelia, interrupting herself upon seeing Marguerite's very lips grow white.

"Well! what was it?" questioned the latter.

"Why, then, you must know that the Venture, in which Lord William Dow sailed, was wrecked off the coast of Cornwall, and Lord William and Mr. Murray were among the lost. We read the whole account of it, copied from an English paper into the Richmond Standard. Lord William's body was washed ashore, the same night of the wreck."

"Poor young man, he deserved a better fate," said Marguerite.

Miss De Lencie went no mere into society that season; indeed, the season was well over before she was able to go out. She announced her intention, as soon as the state of her health should permit her to travel, to terminate her visit to Richmond, and go down to her plantation on the banks of the Potomac. Cornelia would gladly have attended her friend, and only

waited permission to do so; but the waited invitation was not extended, and Marguerite prepared to set out alone.

"We shall meet you at Berkeley or at Saratoga, this summer?" said Cornelia.

"Perhaps—I do not yet know—my plans for the summer are not arranged," said Marguerite.

"But you will write as soon as you reach home?"

"Yes—certainly," pressing her parting kiss upon the lips of her friend.

The promised letter, announcing Marguerite's safe arrival at Plover's Point, was received; but it was the last that came thence; for though Cornelia promptly replied to it, she received no second one. And though Cornelia wrote again and again, her letters remained unanswered. Weeks passed into months and brought midsummer. Col. Compton with his family went to Saratoga, but without meeting Miss De Lencie. About the middle of August they came to Berkeley; but failed to see, or to hear any tidings of, their friend.

"Indeed, I am very much afraid that Marguerite may be lying ill at Plover's Point, surrounded only by ignorant servants, who cannot write to inform us," said Cornelia, advancing a probability so striking and so alarming, that Col. Compton, immediately after taking his family back to Richmond, set out for Plover's Point, to ascertain the state of the case in question. But when he arrival at the plantation, great was his surprise to learn that Miss De Lencie had left home for New York, as early as the middle of April, and had not since been heard from. And this was the last of September. With this information, Col. Compton returned to Richmond. Extreme was the astonishment of the family upon hearing this; and when month after month passed, and no tidings of the missing one arrived, and no clue to her retreat or to her fate was gained, the grief and dismay of her friends could only be equalled by the wonder and conjecture of society at large, upon the strange subject of Marguerite De Lencie's disappearance.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MISS HOFFMAN'S PERILOUS ADVENTURE.

BY MARIETTA HOLLEY, AUTHOR OF "JOSIAH ALLEN'S WIFE."

MISS MIRANDA HOFFMAN, Meadville's only milliner, was exceedingly distrustful and suspicious by nature.

There is a tradition to the effect that, even in early infancy, it was impossible to deceive her in regard to paregoric, by falsely calling it "excellent" and "sweet." And at the age of five, it was said that she discovered, through her own vigilance, that Santa Claus was her mother. As she grew up, this trait in her nature strengthened. By the time she had reached womanhood, it had become almost an eccentricity; and though it doubtless warded off some dangers from her pathway, it brought at the same time its own discomforts.

As a woman, she had a firmly-established habit of looking for thieves and burglars, watching out for them, lest they should come upon her unawares. Every night, no matter how full her house may have been throughout the day of guests and friends, she boldly took a candle and searched through her domicile for hidden robbers. She looked underneath every bed, in all the clothes-presses, under lounges and sofas; and it is said that she had been known to explore even the pantry-shelves in search of them. But vainly. She had never found any, as yet.

She eyed peaceable agents with an eagle gaze, supposing them to be convicts but recently escaped from penal servitude. She had agonized several sensitive colporteurs, by hinting to them her conviction that they were no better than they should be: in fact, she supposed several of them to be spies, sent from foreign governments to detect our weak points.

Having this element of cautiousness so strongly developed in her nature, it may be supposed that when she started to make her annual trip to the wicked city of New York, to purchase millinery goods, it was not without many misgivings and apprehensions of robbery and rapine.

For the week preceding the trip, her cozy cottage, the front part of which was her shop, witnessed preparations as if against an armed host. The pantry-window was considered, by her and her trusty handmaid, as being the most vulnerable point of attack; for it looked directly down upon a fence, whose smooth top had often been known to creak under the tread of small boys, who were supposed to be watching for an

unguarded moment when they could enter, in search of pillage and booty. If boys could enter, why not burglars? This was the question that Miss Hoffman considered unanswerable. And so, previous to her trip to New York, seven new board-slats were nailed across the window by her handmaid, not without pounding her thumb badly, and destroying a large number of nails by driving them in crossways, and flattening them out nearly their entire length upon the outside of the boards. But at last the boards were nailed on, and a new fastening, which was supposed to render burglars powerless, added to that and to all the other windows, which made three fastenings upon each window, besides a nail driven in at the top. An extra chain and padlock were put upon the back-door. New locks were fixed on every other door. Then she locked every bureau-drawer and closet in the house, and hid the keys. After this, repented charges were given to her maid, who was to stay at her next neighbor's during her absence, to spend every wakeful moment with her eye upon the house; and so, finally, Miss Hoffman set off, with a trembling heart, upon her journey.

Now she did not look like a suspicious woman. She was very pretty indeed, with a fair round face, soft dark-gray eyes, and a profusion of hair of a light-golden hue, which was inclined to curl and wave and crinkle around her forehead and round white neck.

Indeed, Miss Hoffman was so very pretty, and had such a sweet womanly look to her face, that it was quite a wonder, in Meadville, that she remained Miss Hoffman still; for she was not so young as she had been; she was not so young as she was when she first opened her millinery store, and that had been flourishing for eight years and over.

But Miss Hoffman seemed to be quite happy in her own way. So, at last, the village gossips seemed to get tired of coupling her name with divers persons of the opposite sex, who were known to entertain feelings of admiration for her.

Very pretty bonnets she made, and very pretty prices she charged for them; and as there was no other milliner in Meadville, and it was an impossibility for its maids and matrons to go bare-headed into society, Miss Hoffman had made a

little fortune, that was likewise very pretty. She had purchased a snug farm, just out of Meadville, on which a tenant was living, and which furnished her and her maids with all their milk, vegetables, flour, chickens, lamb, and in fact supplied all their creature needs. She had money in the bank. She owned the cozy little place in which she lived. And take it all together, she was in a very flourishing financial condition.

Yes, she made very handsome bonnets—very becoming ones. A proof of this was seen on her own head, as she set out for New York; and her face looked uncommonly sweet beneath it. Her money she had secreted in a remote, deeply-hidden pocket; but she carried a hand-bag, of plush and leather, which contained her handkerchief, an extra pair of gloves, a little hand-glass, a small comb-case, and several other pretty feminine belongings, besides a few dollars in change for incidental expenses on the journey. This, with her customary caution, she tightly grasped in her hand, together with her parasol, and a book to beguile the tedium of the journey.

The car was not unpleasantly full, and she found a pleasant seat on the shaded side of it and here, arranging herself to her satisfaction, she opened her book and commenced reading.

But she had hardly got interested in her heroine's rather cruel circumstances, when she met with an interruption. She was sitting on the end of the seat toward the aisle, and the cars were standing still for a few moments. One of her hands held her book, the other lay by her side, still holding her hand-bag; for her cautiousness did not desert her, and she carried her burdens even upon the flowery hills and through the pleasant valleys of fiction. Suddenly, the hand that held the bag was gently taken into a tiny but warm grasp, and looking down, Miss Hoffman saw a sweet child-face looking up into hers, from out a dainty little white-satin and lace hood.

The child was looking quietly upward, with a pair of dark-blue eyes, in the peculiarly calm, self-possessed way of babyhood, and seemed in no hurry to go.

"What is your name, little woman?" said Miss Hoffman, looking tenderly down upon the little one; for she loved children.

"Kitty Ford. What is your name?"

"Miranda Hoffman," answered Miss Hoffman, promptly. "Whose little girl are you, and where do you live?"

"I am my papa's little girl, and I live in New York. Where do you live?"

"At Meadville," said Miss Hoffman. "Are you a good little girl, Kitty?"

"Yes, I am my papa's good little girl. Are you a good girl?"

"Sometimes," said Miss Hoffman, gravely; for she was conscientious, and could see her own faults when she could not see her neighbors'.

"Well," said little Kitty, encouragingly, "you must try to be good, and then your papa will love you. Have you got a papa?"

"No," said Miss Hoffman.

"Haven't you got any little girls at your house—any good little girls?"

"No," said Miss Hoffman, rather sadly, "I haven't any little girls, nor anyone to love me, if I am good."

This was a hard case for little Kitty. It evidently seemed, at first, beyond her childish powers of consolation. But she thought a moment, and then said:

"Well, if you are real good, and not naughty a bit, somebody else's papa will love you, and you won't get shut up in a dark closet."

Again she made a short pause, during which she evidently felt uncomfortable at contemplating her new friend's lonely state; for she added, generously: "If you are afraid, I will come and live with you, if you like; I and my papa and Mary. We will all come, and stay with you always, for I like you. But," said she, seeming to suddenly remember what Miss Hoffman had admitted concerning her goodness, and assuming a sudden stern air of rebuke, "you must be good, else we shall not come and stay with you always. And if you are not good, you will be afraid when it is dark. Will you promise to be a good girl?" she repeated, sternly.

"I will try, little Kitty," said Miss Hoffman, meekly.

"That is right. Now you shall be kissed, if you will hold your head down; for you are pretty, and I like you."

"How much do you like me?" said Miss Hoffman, after she had bent down her head for the kiss.

"Fifty baglets," said Kitty. "Now let me see," said she, coaxingly, "what is in your pretty baglet—is there candy?"

"No."

"Lots of nice bright pennies and dollars? Are there some dollars in it?" said she, persistently.

Now Miss Hoffman was conscientious; and there were in it, to be exact, just ten dollars. She could not lie. But she evaded the question.

"Why do you want to know?"

"I want to tell my papa. He likes to have dollars. He gets all he can."

"Where is your papa?" asked Miss Hoffman, with a sudden suspicion.

The little one turned around, and Miss Hoffman looked up into the face of a gentleman who was sitting on the end of the seat opposite her, on the other side of the aisle, so near that she could have touched him by putting out her hand. He was a very handsome man, hardly arrived yet at middle age, though he was approaching it. He had a fair Saxon complexion, and brown hair and mustache, and a pair of those most dangerous of eyes: dark, and of no distinguishable color in ordinary moments, but which can turn blue and tender in moments of love and happiness.

They were blue now, unmistakably tender and steadfast-blue, as he looked at Miss Hoffman with undisguised admiration. And Miss Hoffman decided, at that first moment, that he was the very handsomest man she had ever seen in her life. And it must be confessed, that as Miss Hoffman met that glance, so admiring yet so respectful, her heart beat more rapidly for a moment. But she withdrew her eyes quickly, and at that moment little Kitty pulled at her hand-bag again.

"How many dollars are there in it?" she continued, with childish persistence.

But now Miss Hoffman drew herself up coldly, and moved along toward the other end of the seat, and took up her book again. And the gentleman opposite said:

"Come here, Kitty. I am afraid you annoy the lady."

Kitty moved away, but slowly, looking back often upon her new acquaintance, till the gentleman took her up in his arms. But Miss Hoffman was holding her book up before her face, and she made no further efforts toward acquaintance.

Yes, she held it up before her and fastened her eyes resolutely upon the pages, wherein Lady Leonore vainly endeavored to soften the malice of a cruel guardian. But Miss Hoffman's mind was not with the hapless Lady Leonore; it was not with the cold-blooded guardian. She was thinking deeply. Had she fallen in company with a band of robbers? Was that sweet-faced child a decoy? Was it sent to her to discover what she had in her hand-bag? Was this a plot to rob her? But still how handsome, how very handsome, the gentleman was! And how admiringly he had looked at her. But she had heard that pickpockets were often persons of admirable address.

They would find, she said to herself, that she would not fall an easy prey; she would be cautious. But then she had told the gentleman everything concerning her; for of course he had

heard every word that she had said. She had told her name, where she lived, and that she was entirely alone in the world.

Well, she had been betrayed into incaution by the pretty child. But she would make up for it now in vigilance. She fixed her eyes firmly on the page before her, and did not look around for a long time, or it seemed so to her, so violent was the effort she made to seem unconscious and at ease.

Her unconsciousness and composure were not helped any by the fact that little Kitty made many comments on her personal appearance, and expressed a strong desire and determination to go back to the "pretty lady;" and twice she called out to her: "Pretty lady, pretty lady!"

And on lifting her eyes, on each of these occasions, Miss Hoffman met the same admiring look from the handsome blue eyes of the gentleman opposite; and upon each occasion, Miss Hoffman's heart gave that same strange throb of joyful terror, followed instantly by the swift thought: could it be, that crime could assume a form so fair?

It could. It had done it in the past. Miss Hoffman's training told her so. She fixed her eyes more firmly upon the book, her suppressed emotion making her cheeks burn with a rosier color than usual, and making her very much handsomer than she commonly was, which was handsome enough, as we have seen.

Kitty's speeches grew less frequent, and at last entirely ceased. A movement in the seat opposite caused Miss Hoffman to glance around in spite of herself, and she saw the gentleman in the act of putting the sleeping Kitty into the arms of a woman with a white cap and apron, who, under ordinary circumstances, Miss Hoffman would have taken for a child's nurse, but who might be and doubtless was an accomplice.

Yes, a dangerous accomplice. Miss Hoffman soon had proof of the fact—unmistakable proof. Instead of taking the sleeping child at once, the woman boldly glanced over at Miss Hoffman, said a few low words to the gentleman, and crossed the aisle; and with the words "pardon me," she bent down over Miss Hoffman's very lap, giving her hand-bag a gentle pull as she did so.

But Miss Hoffman grasped it tightly and triumphantly. She had outwitted her, cool and bold as the attack had been. She held the bag safe in her hand. Such a bold attack was something she had not counted upon.

True, little Kitty had dropped her handkerchief at her feet, where it had lain unnoticed, and a weaker-minded person might have imag-

ined that the nurse had discovered its loss, and had come solely for that; for she proceeded at once to place it over the child's golden curls and little white bonnet, as she lay in her arms.

But it did not deceive Miss Hoffman. No! She had given her mind to the study of thieves and burglars too long; to be hoodwinked by them, or in this fashion.

But as many times as Miss Hoffman relaxed her vigilant circum-pection sufficiently to look about her, just so many times was she aware of being the object of close watchfulness upon the part of one whom she could not help designating in her mind as the chief of the robbers. Out of that whole crowded car-full, she alone was the object of his indirect but watchful attention. True, it was unobtrusive and gentlemanly, but it was plainly visible to her. She did not make a move that he was not aware of; she felt that not once did she open that hand-bag, but he knew it. And she could not avoid the conclusion that he had determined to obtain possession of it before she reached New York.

But he should see, she said to herself, he should see that it was no weak woman that he had to deal with. She would not be robbed of her property while she had life to defend it.

While thinking this, she endeavored to push up the blind; for the sun came in too warmly on her. She could not move it; but before she had time to remonstrate, she heard a respectful "Allow me," and a strong arm reached past her, and easily arranged the refractory blind.

Of course it was the handsome gentleman opposite, and of course Miss Hoffman thanked him calmly and courteously. But her heart beat faster, and she grasped the hand-bag more firmly. "If he thought," she said to herself, "to obtain possession of my bag in such an open manner, he must think I'm a fool."

In due course of time, the train reached New York. Cautiously indeed did Miss Hoffman then demean herself. As soon as she saw the tall gentleman, the woman, and the still sleeping child start for one door of the car, she started for the other door, making her way, however, with great difficulty; for the crowd was against her. But she succeeded at last, and reached the door. What was her surprise, on glancing behind her at that instant, to see that the other party had evidently changed their minds, and were coming towards her. She hastened her footsteps, hardly touched the extended hand of the porter, as she descended the steps, nearly fell, but recovered herself, hurriedly crossed the platform, and hired the first empty cab she saw, and was driven toward her boarding-place: a

genteel haunt, much frequented by country merchants and their wives.

She had asked the driver to drive as fast as possible, and he obeyed. And Miss Hoffman sank back, with a sigh of relief, and looked tenderly down at the imperiled hand-bag, as a thing rescued from danger.

She had at last escaped them, she assured herself. She had been too quick for them, even if they had wished to follow her. She was safe. She was happy—and yet—what a sweet, sweet child that was! She felt that she could have loved it dearly, had fate given it into her hands. And the guilty father! For she did not doubt the relationship, which could be traced so plainly in their faces. That guilty man! Surely fate had designed him for something nobler than a pickpocket. He was so handsome, so noble-looking. And what undisguised admiration, nay, even tenderness, had looked at her from those beautiful blue eyes. Her heart throbbed at the recollection, as it never had before at the warmest words of her many admirers, even while she was saying to herself: "Alas, that evil should assume a form so fair." But she was safe; she had outwitted them. With such thoughts as these invading Miss Hoffman's breast, the cab stopped at the boarding-house.

Miss Hoffman had descended from the carriage, and had opened her hand-bag to pay the driver, who stood beside her. As she stood there, a cab passed. She looked up. No, she did not faint—she was proud of that afterwards—she did not faint when, from the window of the cab, she saw looking intently at her, while she openly took money from that fated bag, the handsome blonde face, while she met the same intent earnest look bent upon her, bent no doubt upon that fated bag.

Her landlady, a woman who had seen far better days, thought that Miss Hoffman acted strangely and absent-minded; but if she was in trouble she made no revelations. And the next morning, Miss Hoffman set out as usual upon her search for flowers, and ribbons, and other millinery goods.

It was at Stewart's store, at exactly half-past eleven o'clock, that her worst apprehensions were realized. She was watched, and followed. She was selecting ribbons, rosy-hued and dainty in texture, when, having occasion to open the hand-bag to consult her memorandum of goods wanted, some connection of thought and memory caused her to lift her eyes and glance cautiously around. That instant, she saw a face—the face—looking intently at her from an opposite counter. Yes, it was he—it was he! He averted

his eyes at once, when he saw he had attracted her attention. But it was enough. She hastily paid for her purchases, grasped her bag firmly, and left the store in an opposite direction.

Well! Three different times during that day, in three different places, did she meet those eyes fastened intently upon her face, but instantly withdrawn as soon as she saw them.

But it was on her homeward walk to her boarding-place that she received the worst shock. She was walking along hurriedly—for she was agitated—and had almost reached her destination when she heard rapid steps behind her. With palpitating heart and trembling steps she hastened on, and was already at the threshold when someone said, close beside her:

"Pardon me, madame, but didn't you drop this?"

She turned. It was, it was, as her beating heart had foretold—it was he! She felt herself grow pale. But she kept her outward composure by a strong effort; and, also, she kept a firm grasp upon her bag.

She managed to say "thank you," took the veil, which was what was held out to her, and which she recognized as her own, and flew, rather than walked, up the steps.

It was broad daylight yet, and the street was full of passers-by. This she recollected, in that horrible moment, when she turned her defenseless back to him, to enter the door. She also recollected the look that he wore, as if he wished to say something of greatest importance to her. She could almost see the words trembling upon his lips in his eyes. What would those words have been, had he spoken them?

He did not follow her, fortunately, she thought, as she staggered on. The hall-door opened, and closed upon her. She had been saved again. But she sank down, for a moment, upon a hall-chair; for she felt that it was a physical impossibility for her, as yet, to mount the stairs to her room.

Not another hour would she remain in that city! She had intended to stay at least three days. She had not yet made half her purchases. But "life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment," she said to herself. "I will leave this very evening. I will take the night train home." She had a list of the articles she had intended to purchase. She would leave it, she resolved, with her landlady, who was an excellent shopper.

This resolution was carried out. Her landlady, though bewailing Miss Hoffman's early departure, readily promised to do the shopping. Thus, the early morning sun that gilded the

mountain-tops gilded also with its shining beams the soft-hued ostrich plume that waved upon Miss Hoffman's pretty spring hat, as its owner entered her own garden.

How safe and peaceful everything looked! How remote from pickpockets and all the wickedness and perfidy of great cities! The morning-glories swung their sweet-scented bells in joyful greeting and congratulation on her escape. The clematis and early roses seemed to swell out in tender happiness over her rescue.

Yes, the peril was over; she was at home; she was safe. The neighbors wondered a little over her speedy return. But she dextrously evaded their questions with some commonplace excuses. She made no one the confidant of her dangerous adventures. And although her heart beat, at times, with a strange, half joyful, half frightened turbulence, at memories that would obtrude, she kept resolutely silent.

Some changes were made, however, in the house. A new chain was put upon the gate, and a new fastening upon the front and side doors. It was a new discovery, not yet patented. A young man, a friend of Miss Hoffman, had invented it, and besought permission to try it upon her own door. It was connected with an electric battery, and it was to be attached to the door-knob at bedtime. Anyone attempting to open the door, after the attachment was fastened to it, received a shock that paralyzed his arm.

It worked well: as an aged deacon, one of Miss Hoffman's most esteemed neighbors, can testify to; for knowing nothing of the new burglar-proof lock, and his wife being taken suddenly ill in the night, he started for Miss Hoffman, to get her to come and see the invalid; and got such a shock, that it nearly caused his death. He has never failed to affirm that he had a stroke of apoplexy. Arguments are thrown away on him on this subject; and he is looking for a second attack, firmly believing that since the first shock was so severe, a second one will kill him. He managed, with great effort, to get up on his feet and totter home. And his wife, being so frightened about him, it cured her of her sickness, which was chiefly nervous. He made his will, and has put his house in order.

When Miss Hoffman heard of her neighbor's sudden attack, just as he was opening her door, she deplored the seeming cruelty of the invention. But she concluded, nevertheless, to keep it on her door for some weeks at least. The nervousness caused by her late adventures had not yet worn away, and she felt that she slept the more soundly for this new electric fastening.

Two weeks passed thus. Amidst the peace of

rural scenes, and the unexplained demand for new bonnets, she was slowly recovering her equanimity of mind, when an incident happened that quite upset her nerves again.

It was a lovely morning, and she was sitting in her cozy little shop, when Mrs. Parks, the hotel-keeper's stout little wife, came in, hurried and out of breath as usual. In answer to Miss Hoffman's hospitable invitation to sit down and stay awhile, she stammered:

"No, I can't possibly stay more than five minutes. I am so hurried. Work always drags when I am away from home; the girls are such time-servers—work while I am with them first-rate, but shiftless when I leave them. And I have got extra work to do, to-day; have got a new boarder from New York; have to do a little extra; but I promised Jane I'd see you—Jane Mayhew. You know, old Miss Mayhew wasn't expected to live any time at all—"

"No, I hadn't heard."

"Well, it is so. Can't live a week, anyway, and may drop off any minute. And I promised Jane—I was over there yesterday; drove over with Hiram after supper—and I told Jane that I'd tell you, without fail, that she wants you to come over there to-day—this afternoon. They want their things fixed up a little, so's to be decent in case anything happens. The girls are all at home: Malvina, and Almira, and Harriet. And they are all of 'em just about sick—don't feel like goin' out any. And they want to talk it over with you themselves, or they would have sent their bonnets over by me. They don't want much done to 'em, only just a little fixin', you know. They only left off their mourning a few months ago for their brother Ephraim. They have got plenty of things, if they are fixed a little."

"Well," said Miss Hoffman, "I suppose I can go. It seems to be a plain case of duty."

"Well, yes, it seems like that; for she may drop off any minute now—dreadful good woman, and suffers, oh there ain't no tellin' how much she suffers. There can't anybody wish her sufferin's to be prolonged. And yet it is hard to give her up. They feel so; they feel just like that. But I must go. I told Jane I'd tell you."

"Yes, I'll go on the one o'clock train."

"That will be plenty of time. I'd go over myself with you, if it wasn't for my extra work. We have got a gentleman, a real gentleman, right from New York; and Hiram wants to do a little different for him."

"Has he come for any length of time?"

"I don't know how long. A good-looking man he is. And do you know, Hiram says he

made a sight of inquiries in a quiet way about you; talked about you a sight."

"About me?"

"Yes, about you."

"Oh, he is probably an agent for some of the millinery stores there."

"Well, maybe that is so; I didn't think of that. I guess he hasn't mentioned what his business is. A good-looking man—first-rate, and acts like a gentleman. But I must go. I wouldn't have thought I could have left home a minute, but I promised Jane I'd see you—and you think you'll go without fail—"

"Yes, I'll go this afternoon."

And the busy little woman departed, talking, as she went, to Miss Hoffman's Maltese cat, who followed her down the steps.

It was said that the little woman talked when entirely alone; and that, even in her sleep, she did not cease her harmless prattle; but that might be gossip.

Miss Hoffman kept her promise. She took the afternoon train to the little wayside station four miles away, near which lived the family who claimed her services. She spent the afternoon in conscientious work, and took the evening train back to Mendville.

The train was due before sunset, but for some reason it was delayed; so it was in the early dusk of the fair June evening that Miss Hoffman set out on her lonely walk of half a mile, that lay between the station and the village.

The train she had come on was an accommodation train, and no one left it but herself. So she walked on rather briskly, carrying on her arm the identical little bag that had caused her so much disquietude in New York.

She left the one little house near the station behind her; passed the Methodist parsonage, with its trimly-kept garden; and now, there is no house between her and the village, and no one bearing the semblance of a human being in sight, excepting a scarecrow in Deacon Jones' field just over the fence. She looked at it narrowly as she passed, thinking it might be a masked robber. But no! The fluttering rags waved around a silent figure. She was safe! No one was in sight. Unless—could it be—was that a man approaching her? It was! A man—and a stranger. He was coming towards her, with long easy strides; and she was now in the most desolate part of the way—not a house within a quarter of a mile on either side. No one to listen to her cries, if danger menaced her.

The man approached nearer, nearer, still nearer. Miss Hoffman's heart began to beat, with quick sharp throbs, against her decorous

corset. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes grew darker with repressed feeling. Yet she had probably never looked prettier than she did at that moment of excitement and peril. She hugged her bag closer to her side, and hastened her already quick footsteps.

At last the man was opposite. Miss Hoffman lifted her startled eyes, and gazed full upon his face. Then, with a quick, smothered shriek, she started upon a run.

For it was—it was—the stranger; the robber; the tall handsome fiend who had followed her with silent persistence in New York. She saw it all. Failing to obtain possession of his booty in that city, he had tracked her home, and watched her outgoings, in order that here, in the quiet country, he might rob her in peace.

And the bag! The little leather hand-bag, that he had so long and patiently coveted. It was here on her arm, and here she was in his power—alone and unprotected—on this solitary country road. All these thoughts floated through her mind in a moment, as she started to run. Could she escape him? Could she outrun him? Could she scream for help? What could she do?

Alas! what she did do was to catch her feet on a vagrant fish-pole, that a careless urchin had left by the roadside, and fall prostrate.

When Miss Hoffman looked up again, the tall handsome man she remembered so well was bending over her, and she would have thought he looked uncommonly disturbed and anxious for a robber, if she had only given it a moment's reflection. But no; she could think of nothing, only to escape with her life, if haply that were possible. She staggered to her feet, and with trembling hands reached out the hand-bag.

"Take it, take it," she pleaded, "but spare my life. Take all my property—take everything—but spare me."

"I don't want your property," he cried, in his excitement giving vent to the most profound emotions of his soul. "It is you I want, and not your property."

"Good heavens," he cried, a moment after, in a pitiful tone. "What do you take me for? I love you—I want to marry you! To think," said he, in a still more reproachful tone, "that from the very first minute I saw you, I would have lain down my life for you, and here you are taking me for a murderer."

Miss Hoffman did not speak. She could not. He went on impetuously:

"You are the prettiest woman I ever saw; you are the sweetest woman in the world; and I have loved you, and couldn't keep you out of my mind for a minute, since that first time I saw you on the cars. And I followed you around in New York, hoping I might get some chance to be introduced to you; and followed you home here, because I remembered that the minister here is a friend of mine; and I was going there to-night to try to get him to introduce me to you properly. And then to think you should take me for a robber."

Miss Hoffman trembled. What was she to do? Bolts and bars could keep out an ordinary burglar; but they were of no avail with this one. It was her heart that he was after—her heart only; and how could she protect that strongly-invaded garrison? How, indeed?

She had never made provision for such a danger. She and her trusty handmaid had never laid up an armament against such a foe. And she felt, at that moment, that her heart was giving treacherous signs of weakness. She knew, in her inmost consciousness, that the new patent burglar-proof attachment would be powerless to aid her.

And, indeed, before two weeks were ended, her weak heart capitulated; or rather that fair fortress yielded unconditionally, and the bold marauder walked in and took possession.

But as he proved to be a most gentle and loving robber, and as sweet little motherless Kitty proved to be the sweetest of little thieves, stealing the very warmest affections of her new mother, let us hope that Miss Hoffman never regretted her PERILOUS ADVENTURE.

"MISTRESS SOFT-EYES."

BY MAUDE EWELL.

CHAPTER I.

ONE dowy August morning, more than twenty years ago, a young gentleman was traveling in Virginia. He had suddenly remembered, when his summer vacation came, that he had some cousins in Fairfax County, who would doubtless be charmed to see him, for they had given him more than one invitation. So he sent them a letter of warning, and deciding that a horse-back ride was the best thing for his health, he secured a tall, raw-boned creature with a swift trot, but mischief in her eyes, and began his journey.

Being town-bred, he did not ride with much grace or agility; but he managed to keep his seat, nevertheless. At last he saw, in the distance, a house, faintly discernible through a wilderness of trees, and was wondering if it could be his destination, when there was a crackling sound, the flutter of something white in a thicket of damson trees near by, and his horse suddenly shied, flinging off his rider; after which exploit the animal ran gayly away.

As our hero rolled into a little stony gully by the roadside, he heard a gurgle of laughter, and glancing up, saw two bright eyes making merry over his discomfiture. Simultaneously, a sharp pain shot through the arm on which he had fallen. He felt that the laugh was an insult, under these circumstances. He scrambled up, but it was only to sink back again, with a feeling of deadly sickness.

"Mercy!" said a penitent voice over his shoulder. "I'm very sorry I laughed at you, sir. I didn't know you were hurt." And scrambling over the fence, the speaker, a young girl, eyed him sympathetically. "Oh, how pale you look!" she cried. "I'm mighty sorry; I'm afraid it was my fault—you know, I didn't want you to see me. Is it broken?" She took hold of the arm and moved it up and down, and when he exclaimed with the pain, dropped it in great alarm. "It's broken right in two pieces," she said, solemnly; "you'll have to go home with me and let us send for the doctor. My sister Frances will do all she can for you—come."

He got up unsteadily and went with her. They soon reached a dilapidated gateway with stone pillars, but no gate; and in the neglected avenue Mr. Winston found his horse cropping

the tall grass contentedly. In the distance was the house, with doors and windows wide open; big and high; with an unfinished look, suggestive of disappointed aspirations; the windows shutterless, and the great porch in front, reached by a long flight of steps, destitute of railing or ornament; but the creeping trumpet-vine that clung around it, and the acacia branches that embraced its roof, picturesquely making up for all deficiencies.

He sank upon the sofa as soon as he reached the large and lofty, but desolate, parlor, and was at once surrounded by the ladies of the family. "Quick," said one, who seemed an elder sister, addressing his late companion, "run, Anastasia, and send Uncle Jack for the doctor, and tell father to come. Run!" It seemed to him that there was a look of pleased excitement on Mistress Anastasia's face as she flew out of the room. Presently there entered a dingy, deprecatory little gentleman, who hovered around with the air of one not yet wakened from a dream, watching his daughter's movements with startled eyes. The doctor was not long in coming. He also wore an expression of pleased excitement; and the twilight found Mr. Winston quite comfortable, the dingy little gentleman near at hand, and his daughters flitting softly in and out.

"I'm very sorry fo' this," said the little gentleman. He spoke in a hesitating way, and chopped his words off in the true old Virginia fashion. "I since'ly regret—that is I'm glad—I mean—well, of cou'se, not that exactly, but I'm sho' I can't express the pleas'u' I feel at having you here. 'Tis an ill wind'—you know the old proverb, ah?"

"Thank you, sir," replied Winston, "you are all extremely kind;" and he then proceeded to give some account of himself.

"Charles Wins'on!" cried the other, rising in some excitement; "yo' cousin Tom lives five miles from here, but you have relations in this house, sir, who are as glad to see you as he would be. Francis Hathaway is my name, sir. I s'pose you've heard yo' father speak of me. I'm yo' third cousin, sir, twice removed. Charles Wins'on—what pleasant recollections of the past that name brings up! I'm happy to make yo' 'quaintance, sir." And clasping Mr. Winston's hand with cousinly fervor he plunged into a

minute explanation of the relationship between them, involving the histories of several generations of Winstons and Hathaways, an explanation which had a most confusing effect on his hearer, who was lost in the hopeless entanglement of names and dates.

When the ladies appeared again they were presented to "Our cousin, my dears, Mr. Charles Wins' on;" and they greeted the newly-found relative with kindly smiles that pleased and touched him. Miss Frances, the eldest, was tall and angular, with a face that was still pretty, though careworn; her eyes expressed patient anxiety; and her whole appearance showed that she was much older than the younger sister. The latter, Miss Anastasia, in face and figure was at least fifteen; but she was dressed like a child of ten, in a short frock and a long-sleeved high-necked apron. Her light-brown hair was put back, and tied with a bit of faded ribbon. Everything in the house, however, seemed faded but her eyes and complexion. The quaint simplicity of her attire, the demure yet graceful poise of the well-shaped head and shoulders, pleased Mr. Winston's critical eyes; and he lay watching her from his shadowy place on the sofa, while he talked to Mr. Hathaway and Miss Frances, or rather listened while they talked to him; for Mistress Soft-Eyes, as he mentally christened the younger sister, was as mute as a mouse, not only at first, but during all the evening.

The fracture of the arm proved to be a simple one, and healed rapidly; and Winston was so well contented with his quarters that he cheerfully resigned all idea of going farther; indeed, he did not even send an explanation to his cousin Tom; and that gentleman probably thought, if he thought of it at all, that the visit had been given up. The whole place was surrounded by such an atmosphere of dreamy quiet; it seemed so secluded among its encircling trees, that he could not shake off the feeling of being miles and miles away from any other house. The more he saw, meantime, of the Hathaways, the better he liked them; they were the best, the kindest, the most unpractical people in the world, he thought; and he sighed to see the evidences that they were sinking down, slowly but surely, into poverty, perhaps want. The head of the house dreamed away his innocent life in seeming unconsciousness that his property was slipping out of his hands; that his house was fairly tumbling down over his head. The only books he read were the Spectator, Pope, Swift, and other writers of a hundred years ago; his ancestors had bought the books when they

were new, and he had never added to them. There was not even a newspaper. He had an invalid sister, Miss Margaret, and an only son, who had gone to try his luck in that boundless field of adventure vaguely called "the West."

"He is trying to retrieve our fallen fortunes," said Miss Frances, with a little touch of that pathetic pride which has come to look on fallen fortunes as its just and honorable heritage. Miss Frances shared her father's forgetfulness of the flight of time; she treated Anastasia like a child, and dressed her in the short frocks and long aprons that she had made for her five years ago; meanwhile the little romp of ten had grown tall and womanly, with the step and eyes of a gazelle.

Anastasia was Winston's most constant companion during those long, pleasant, languid days, when he lay on the sofa, or lounged about the big shady garden; for Miss Frances was busy with her household affairs. Our hero treated her in a patronizing, elder-brotherly fashion, that did not seem to give offense; it pleased him to hear her frank childish talk; she impressed him as being a charming contrast to most of the city-bred girls he knew.

CHAPTER II.

"Soft-Eyes," he said, one day, twisting a long flexuous lock of her hair around his finger, with dangerous cousinly familiarity, "don't you ever get tired of your life in this lonely place? Don't you sometimes wish you could go away, and see something of gayety, and mix with other girls?"

She met his inquisitive eyes with a startled flash of her own.

"What makes you ask me that?" she said, quickly. "Do you think it so very dull and tiresome?"

"Oh, no," he answered. "I like it very much; but then, I have you all to talk to and amuse me. Besides, I'm company, you know. But you've lived here ever since you were born, and your sister and aunt are so much older—that I think you would want a companion—somebody nearer your own age, I mean."

"No, I don't," said Anastasia, loyally, though something in the sudden gravity of her face told Winston that he had suggested a feeling not unknown to her, if unconfessed. "This is my home. I love it, and I would rather live here than at any other place. I don't get lonely here, and I don't want any young companion. Father, and sister, and aunt, and Uncle Jack, are my companions—there!"

Her tone of defiance amused him, and he pur-

sued his inquiries, though conscience pricked him, as he said:

"But wouldn't you like to go visiting, sometimes? Say to parties, with a white dress on, and—and flowers in your hair, and things like that?"

Here, as Mr. Winston's ideas of fashionable dress were of the vaguest kind, his description broke down ignominiously.

"I don't know," she answered, with a little falter of indecision. "I never thought about it much. Perhaps, if I were rich, I would like it. But I do go out sometimes," with animated pride. "Sister and I go to spend the day at places—our neighbors, you know; but I don't like that much," with a little shiver. "Oh, it's so tiresome to sit and listen to people talking over one's head; for they never talk to me. I suppose it's not polite to take a book and read, or I might enjoy that. And I hate the girls I see—indeed I do—they giggle, and look at each other; and I think they are laughing at me in my old faded frock. They have beautiful dresses, all sorts of pretty colors, with ribbons and things—nice and new; but my frocks are always made out of somebody's old ones. Why, I declare," cried she, with the air of one suddenly awakened to surprise at some long familiar fact, "I can't remember—I don't think I ever had anything new in my whole life."

Winston laughed to conceal the effect of this pathetic little confession. Remembering what Miss Frances had said about the fallen fortunes of the family, he was able to understand the cause of Anastasia's mortifying experience.

"Never mind, Soft-Eyes," he said, with a thrill of generous indignation, at sight of some tears that had risen in her eyes. "Beauty is beautiful in the shabbiest garments; you have that for your consolation. And then your turn will certainly come. When I am married, you must come to see my wife and me. You and I are cousins, you know."

"Are you going to be married?" asked Anastasia, with sudden, startled interest.

"Yes," he answered. "Sometime—perhaps next year—I don't know. Do you want to see my sweetheart's picture?"

He took out an ambrotype as he spoke, which represented a pretty coquettish face, of the pink and white style, looking from an aureola of golden curls. How different from the latent passion and noble outlines of that face that bent over it now with such attentive grace.

"She's beautiful," said Anastasia, warmly. Then, drawing a little nearer: "I suppose you love her very much. Tell me, Cousin Charley,

do you really feel like that? It must be very singular."

"Like what?" he asked, rather shortly, and with a little frown.

"Oh, like people do in books, when they are in love. Like Romeo—like Troilus—like Valentine, when he was in love with Sylvia. Don't you remember what he said?"

And her voice took on a thrilling vibration, as she repeated those passionate lines—who does not know their beauty?—beginning:

"What light is light if Sylvia be not seen?"

"What joy is joy if Sylvia be not by?"

"Is that the way you feel, Cousin Charley?" she cried. "It must be very strange. Is your love like that?"

"No," he answered. "I am not so unfortunate. You see, I enjoy many things in the absence of my fair lady. Lovers now are more commonplace and—less devoted, I suppose."

"Well, do you think people ever feel so, except in books?" asked Mistress Soft-Eyes, with incredulity in her tone. "It must be very singular—and—and inconvenient. Indeed, I don't think I could ever love anyone so much."

"Oh, I don't know," said Winston, in his most elder-brotherly manner. "Some people are more impulsive and self-forgetful than others, and perhaps devotion has grown tame and cool in these degenerate days. You see, the difficulties are not so great—fair ladies are so easily won—"

"Oh," interrupted she, with a little horrified start. "Easily won? But how can they be? Why, I would never, never let anybody think that I liked them—in that way," with a vivid blush, "unless I was very sure; unless they had proved, over and over again, that they loved me better than anybody or anything else in the whole world. But I don't suppose that I shall ever be troubled about such things. I don't suppose anybody will try to win me," folding her hands with a soft little sigh.

He looked at the beautiful face and smiled, but said nothing. The subject was distasteful to him, and he was sorry to have introduced it. He looked at the picture, and somehow it had lost a faint glamor that used to belong to its prettiness. The image of the original, that imagination once made so beautiful, seemed to have grown dim and uninteresting. Winston wondered to himself how he had drifted so easily into that engagement. She certainly had not been hard to win. She had somewhat resembled a ripe peach, that drops unexpectedly into the idle hand that merely caresses its downy beauty.

Suddenly, Anastasia burst into a laugh.

"Why, how funny it would be," she cried, "to see you married. I cannot imagine it."

"But why?" he asked, the least bit chagrined.

"Oh, you are so young. You don't seem so very much older than I am. Yo' face," dropping into her Virginia accent, "is smooth, and yo' eyes like a boy's. Oh, it would be ridiculous."

The cool gray depths of Mr. Winston's eyes showed a passing breeze of irritation; for he had always been sensitive about his boyish appearance.

"Do you think so?" he said. Then he made an effort to change the subject. "So you read Shakespeare," he added, "and learn the most romantic parts by heart—eh, Soft-Eyes?"

"Oh, no," she answered, with a blush. "I don't learn it. I only read it over once or twice; and it comes to me afterwards. Yes, I have read all the plays: I like them better than anything else. I have read all the books in the house; but I like Shakespeare best."

Then with that womanly cleverness that sometimes startled him, she discussed, with no small amount of critical insight, the relative merits and genius of those dull old volumes, that had failed to satisfy her healthy intellectual thirst.

"Did you ever read any of Scott's novels?" he asked. "Do you know anything of Byron, and Shelley, and Wordsworth? Or Tennyson, or Longfellow, or Hawthorne?"

"Why, I never even heard of them," with great humility. "I suppose the books I have read are very old-fashioned now. I don't like novels one bit. We have Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison; but they are so foolish and tiresome; and as for Peregrine Pickle, and Tom Jones, and all of them, I hate 'em; they are detestable."

"I'll send you some of my books when I go home," he said, "some that I know you will like. I go, you know, to-morrow. You must write to me, Soft-Eyes, won't you?"

"I can't promise," she answered. "I never wrote a letter in my life. You would be shocked at my handwriting and bad spelling. Oh, you don't know how ignorant I am. I never went to school a single day."

She watched him anxiously, to see the effect of this shocking revelation; and brightened when he only laughed, and said:

"Don't grieve about it, Soft-Eyes. The effect of this disadvantage has not quite uncivilized you. But how did it happen?"

"We have been so poor," was her reply, "ever since I can remember, that there was no money to send me to school. I used to say my lessons to Sister Frances; but she was always so

busy, and then she had forgotten some things; and I always hated to do sums and write copies; and so," she concluded, meekly, "I'm afraid I didn't learn as much as I ought."

When the next day came, Miss Frances gave him a cousinly kiss, and a kindly invitation to come again. Then he turned to where Anastasia stood, looking very grave.

"Good-by, Soft-Eyes," he said. "Don't forget that you are to write to me; and think of me when you read the books I'm going to send."

He took her hand, as he spoke, and made a motion as if to kiss her; but she snatched her hand away, and cried, with a sudden burst of tears: "I don't want to kiss you—there!" and rushed out of the room. Somehow, a faint electrical thrill shot through him. What did it mean? He broke into a nervous little laugh, and blushed crimson.

All that day, and for many days after, Mr. Winston was haunted by the memory of two lovely tearful eyes—Anastasia's eyes, when they last met his own. It made him angry.

"Pshaw!" thought he, "I'm surely not such a weak-minded fool as to fall in love with a child like that—when I am engaged to another woman, too. A man of my age, full twenty-six, ought to know better. It's absurd."

But the haunting eyes continued to trouble him. He wrote to the Hathaways, and received, after some delay, a kind answer from Miss Frances, in quaint boarding-school-composition style. Then he sent another letter, and the books he had promised Anastasia: some of the Waverley novels, David Copperfield, and several little blue gilt-edged volumes of his favorite poetry. The thanks and acknowledgment came, after awhile, in a little note, all on one side of the paper, in a large, stiff, scrawling hand; a very polite and ceremonious little letter, that Mr. Winston put away in his pocket-book, taking it out sometimes to read it, with an amused smile, then laying the little scrap of paper tenderly back again. But his next letter was not answered for a long time, and the next not at all. So his correspondence with the Hathaways died a natural death, and the remembrance of his stay with them seemed like a dream, though a dream that had made a lasting impression upon him.

Meantime, his engagement had been broken. But not by him. For while he was struggling to regain his old consistency, and wasting time in angry self-accusations for his indifference, there came a letter from the lady—she had not the courage to tell him when they met, the evening before, for, poor fellow, what a blow it would be to him—begging to be released from her

promise. Ah, with what a sigh of relief he had read that letter. Let us tell the honest truth. After that visit to Virginia, he had fancied his fiancée changed. The chatter was tiresome to him, that he had once thought so amusing; her songs were stale and commonplace; and one day, when he detected a dash of rouge on her plump cheeks, rebellious memory showed him Anastasia's tender generous bloom. He was a man of too much honor to have broken the engagement; but do you think he was sorry when it was broken by the lady herself?

CHAPTER III.

THE next year the war broke out between the North and the South, and many summers and winters passed before Winston heard of his cousins in Virginia. Meantime, how had it fared with them? Indly enough, heaven knows, especially with Anastasia. The contentment she had confessed to Cousin Charles left her, after that day when she so passionately refused to kiss him. Neglectful of her former duties and amusements, she moved with fitful steps through the dull house, while Miss Frances and Miss Margaret, noting the lustre of her eyes, the flickering blaze of color in her cheeks, glanced at each other in surprise. "How pretty she was," they said, with admiring exultation. They observed her unusual silence; but with a kindly delicacy left her to herself.

All this while she thought of Winston, with a shrinking consciousness that he had wounded her, though she would have died sooner than acknowledge it. The books he had sent her were read and re-read with keen delight. But his kind answer to her poor little note of thanks somehow made her angry, and produced one of those unreasonable bursts of crying that had lately grown common with her when alone. "I wish that he had never come here," she said to herself; "I wish he had never come. What right had he to tell me about things he knew I could never have? I know he despises me, and looks on me as ignorant and foolish. I know he laughs when he thinks of me—of this place—of all of us. Oh, I hate him! I wish—I wish he had not come."

Miss Frances realized that her child had grown into a woman, when, after awhile, Anastasia left off her long aprons and arranged her dress as far as possible in more womanly fashion. The poor girl also collected some old school-books and began to study them, fitfully at first, but afterwards with increasing interest and perseverance. Then, when she was growing more like

her old self again, only older, graver, more womanly, the war came on; and for years nothing was thought of, North or South, but battles, but sorrow, but desolation, but death. Young Hathaway hurried home from the West, joined the Confederate Army, and fell at Gettysburg. Poor old Mr. Hathaway, when he heard this fatal news, was seized with a paralysis from which—the doctor told Miss Frances—he could never recover. Then, in less than a month after, Miss Margaret took a fever and died. When peace came, Miss Frances and Anastasia found themselves more desolate and poverty-stricken than ever. All the servants had long been gone, all except Uncle Jack, whose fidelity, not to say his age, forbade such an idea. Miss Frances devoted her days to the care of the poor helpless old gentleman, while Anastasia was cook, housemaid, washerwoman, everything; for Uncle Jack could render but little aid with his shaky, feeble, withered old hands.

One lovely evening, in June, Anastasia found herself more than usually oppressed by the lonely silence of the house. Decay and dilapidation had made rapid progress of late about the premises. The clusters of roses on the lawn seemed to have lost heart, and courage to hold their own, and were yielding place to crowding thickets of slim young locust and alanthus trees, under whose shadows weeds and brambles seemed killing out the grass. In the garden where she and Cousin Charles had loitered together, confusion reigned, except in one little corner which Uncle Jack still tried to cultivate. But the scene was pleasant, nevertheless; nature was looking her best; one could not help being pleased and soothed. Anastasia wandered about the place, lingering here and there. Presently the slow strokes of an axe caught her attention. Looking up, she beheld Uncle Jack feebly chopping on one of the three remaining logs, that formed their scanty wood-pile.

"Hi, lill missis, dat you?" said the old man, pausing a moment as she approached; "I's tryin' ter cut you some wood; I's tryin' my bes'; but dis ole han' so stiff an' trimbly, dat I can't do much. I isn' much mo' 'count fo' dis worl, lill missis. Dis ole nigger mos' used up—dat's so. He—ho—ho!" He gave a deprecatory chuckle and resumed his work, while Anastasia, seating herself on the grass near by, watched him with pitying eyes. How old, and weak, and tremulous he looked! How inadequate to his task! It seemed a painful effort for him to raise the axe; and the unsteady downward strokes made but little impression. What a pity! What a shame, that he should have to work so hard!

Why, he would soon be eighty years old, and here he was, trying to chop wood.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet, with cheeks and eyes indignantly aflame.

"Uncle Jack," she cried, laying hold of the axe with her strong young hands, "give me this, and let me cut the wood. I'm strong—I will do it—you are too old for hard work like this. I can see that it hurts you, all the time—here, give it me."

The horror and amaze in the old man's face almost made her laugh. He held on to the axe with all his little strength.

"W'y, lill missis," he said, when his voice came back after the first shock, "now how you is foolishin'. White quality lady like you can't chop wood. You don't know how. I don't 'low dat—no, no."

"I'll learn soon enough, Uncle Jack. Give me the axe, and let me try."

She took it from his feebly-resistant hands, and planting one foot on the log, as he had done, to keep it steady, raised the implement, with a little defiant fling, and began hacking away fiercely; while Uncle Jack dodged around, trying with frantic gestures to dissuade her from what seemed to him the most "low-life" work she had yet undertaken. "'Deed, Miss Stasy," cried he, with a comical accent of mortification, "'deed, now, don't you do dat, missy. W'at fo' you wan' ter do dat work? Gimme dat axe, lill missis; gimme it, an' let dis yeh ole Uncle Jack cut de wood. What else he made fo'? He, he!"

But "lill missis" was not moved by these entreaties, and Uncle Jack grew more and more excited.

"Now you can't do dat," he cried. "Now you don't know how. You gimme dat axe, an' go tend ter yo' par. I hears 'in a-hollerin' fo' you. Now 'deed you cut yo' foot off. Miss Stasy, you cut yo'se'f now—now stop dat—you hit yo'se'f in de eye wid de chip. Oh—h—h! 'deed you hit yo'se'f in de eye—"

She paused in sudden laughter.

"Uncle Jack," she said, with dignified air, "don't you see how much faster I can do this than you can? It doesn't hurt me—I like it. You go see if my father is awake, and stay with him till I come—go."

The old man hobbled off reluctantly, feeling that the world was coming to an end. Anastasia took breath awhile, and resumed her task, getting very red and hot, but unconsciously showing some splendid curves of her tall slender figure. What graceful sweeping motions of her lithe arms and shoulders, as she alternately bent forward

and rose upright. With what a fine high-strung air of determination she lifted the dull old axe; and with what an aimless hack it descended; for nature had not gifted her with such a genius for wood-cutting that her first attempt proved a grand success. But by dint of perseverance, she chopped off several sticks before she paused for another rest.

Suddenly, glancing toward the house, her startled eyes beheld a tall gentleman coming from that direction. He looked handsome, erect, well dressed; but there was an indignant flush on his face; and he came swiftly across the sunlit grass, bareheaded, with hand outstretched, crying: "Anastasia!"

"Cousin Charles!" she said, quickly; but drew her hands down, and her head up, with a defensive motion.

"Good heavens," he cried, "this is too bad. Is it possible that you have to do such rough hard work? Is it so bad as this? Here, let me do this for you."

He spoke kindly enough, and tried to take hold of her axe; but she held on to it firmly, waving him away.

"You don't know how it hurts me to see all this," he said. "I had no idea it was so bad. If I could have known sooner, or helped—"

"If you had known, what good would it have been?" she cried, almost fiercely. "What could you have done? We are all ruined—ruined. My brother is dead; it broke my father's heart. He will never be like he was before. Aunt Margaret is dead, too. I know it was the grief and trouble that killed her. We are nothing but beggars—beggars. The old place is hopelessly mortgaged. We are living here because people pity us and let us stay." And she broke down in a passion of tears.

The tempest of grief seemed to soothe her. She looked up, and put out her hand graciously. What a strong, shapely, nervous hand it was, Winston thought; a hand used to work, and therefore not near so white as his own, but taper-fingered, with the slimmest wrist in the world.

"Forgive me, Cousin Charles," said she, "I had no right to speak so. It was not your fault. It was nobody's—it was fate."

"And now let me do this for you," he said, glancing at the log of wood at her feet.

"Oh, no!" with a flush; "there is no need—I—I was only amusing myself. Uncle Jack is with us still, and he does a great deal for me."

"Oh, Soft-Eyes," thought Winston, "you are no better than other women. What innocent deceit will you not all practice, for the sake of keeping up appearances." But he said nothing

in words; and directly they went into the house together.

"Do you want to see father?" asked Anastasia. "He is very much changed since you saw him last. He does not often know people; but he might remember you." She led the way, as she spoke, to the room where Mr. Hathaway sat, propped up in a big chair, staring vacantly in front of him. The kind old man was helpless and motionless now, except that he moved his head and shoulders from side to side incessantly, with an uncertain, restless motion. When his daughter announced their guest, a ghost of a smile lit up his face, and he nodded several times. "Charley Wins' on—of co'so I know him," he said, "of co'so. Why, Charley, it's forty years since I saw you—forty years—forty—yo' son was killed at the battle of Gettysburg, wasn't he? Oh, no—no, it was my son—mine—mine." Poor old man, his mind was gone forever.

CHAPTER IV.

WINSTON was waiting in the tea-room for the re-appearance of Miss Anastasia. How the old times came back, as he looked about. The same quaint engravings of King Lear and Cymbeline hung on the walls. The curtains that had been almost brown, years ago, were now more faded than ever. But all this changed when Anastasia entered; a sudden flood of light, as it were, pouring into the room. She had changed her dress for an old India muslin, exquisitely fine, but now almost threadbare; one that had been her grandmother's, and was made with a baby-waist, and sleeves reaching only to the elbows. Hearing her approach, he turned and spoke, and she stopped for a moment before entering. The door by which she came led down, by a step or two, to the lawn; and she paused on one of these lower steps, and looked up.

Never, to his last day, will he forget the picture she made as she stood there, holding back her skirts with both hands and looking up smilingly at him, to reply. He looked at her so eagerly, and with such evident admiration, that she burst out laughing and made him a little courtesy, her hands still holding back her narrow skirts. Then she checked herself, gravely. How long was it since she had laughed like that? It gave her quite a guilty feeling. The room seemed to him a little Paradise.

Her tea-table was soon arranged—indeed, there was very little to put on it—and going out she presently returned with a rather shamefaced air, bringing a plate of hot-cakes and a pot of tea. Oh, Soft-Eyes, how it hurt your pride—this poverty-stricken little repast! You stood at the

head of the table with lofty air, but the blush on your cheek was not borrowed from the sunset this time. No, indeed. "Come, Cousin Charles," said she, "you must be tired and hungry after your long walk from the station. Won't you have a cup of tea?"

Of course he would. He took his place and watched her pour the tea out. "I'm sorry I can't offer you a teaspoon," she said, "but they're all gone, and the sugar-tongs too," with a gay laugh. "This tea is a great treat to me, cousin; we couldn't get any for a long time, you know. Oh, dear!" with a sudden little start; "I quite forgot—how is your wife, Cousin Charles?"

He gave a little start. "Oh, confound it!" he said, in a great flurry; "I am not married—what put that into your head?"

"Not married?" With her wide-open eyes expressing more mischief than surprise, however. "Why, you told me that you—"

"Yes, I know," he said, and hastened to explain. "I did have such an idea once, but it never came to anything; it was broken off. My sweetheart jilted me; turned me off for somebody else, you know: a millionaire, a great army contractor," with a laugh.

"What a shame!" murmured she, sympathetically. "I beg your pardon for referring to it. But I didn't know. I wonder that anyone should be so cruel."

"But you see I have survived it. I don't look as if my heart was broken, do I?"

That night, as Winston leaned from his bedroom window, enjoying a cigar and the lovely summer moonlight, he thought of them all with an unusual warmth and tenderness. An uncle had lately died, and left him a large fortune. Why not marry Anastasia, if she would have him? Buy this place, and turn it into a cheerful well-kept summer residence? Having resolved thus, he determined to begin the siege as soon as possible. But he waited, all the next day, in vain, for a favorable chance to speak his mind to her; it did not come till twilight, when he found himself alone with Anastasia, on the porch, watching the red moon growing smaller and whiter, as it climbed up over the tree-tops. Then, with many inward thrills and tremors, and some changes of color that were lost upon her in the dusk, he pleaded his cause, stammering a little, but not without some eloquence, after all.

"And now, Soft-Eyes, don't you think," he said, in conclusion, "you can be happy with me? Will you try, cousin—eh?"

The twilight was over her face like a veil; but the hand he tried to take seemed quietly resistant.

"I'm very sorry," she murmured, soberly, after a little pause. "How did you ever come to think of such a thing? It grieves me so much to have to say no," (he couldn't see her smile,) "but you won't mind it much, I daresay," with a profound sigh.

"Oh, don't say so," he cried, with tender vehemence, and another futile snatch at that elusive hand. "Why, I should mind it more than I ever did anything in my whole life before. Must you say no, Soft-Eyes? Why should it be no?"

"I will never marry anybody, I think. I'll be an old maid, like Sister Frances. But I wonder at your asking me this. You know you wrote how ignorant I was, and how stupid, and—"

"Don't talk nonsense," with a little quiver of impatience. "You know I don't think you either stupid or ignorant. I never did. You quite misunderstood me. You're too sensitive, dear. No other woman can ever suit me so well. I never loved anyone as I do you. Are you thinking of what I told you once? Pshaw, that was all a mistake—a piece of idle folly."

"Idle folly? Can people put love on and off, like an old shoe? Don't think because I am an ignorant country girl that I am quite an—idiot." With almost a sob. "If it had not been for that, I might"—another sob—"I might have loved you, I might have been your wife, but now—"

She shook her head decisively, while our hero began pleading, apologizing, explaining. But in the midst of his tirade, she suddenly started up and ran into the house; ran away to her own room, where, shutting the door behind her, she fell into an agitation of tears and laughter; and even in the summer darkness, and all alone, the hot blushes came and went on her face. Foolish, incoherent Anastasia. Perhaps if Cousin Charles had seen her then, he would not have looked so down-hearted, when he stalked off to bed.

But Winston was not one to own defeat. His usual determination to have his own way was strengthened by a virtuous feeling that in this case at least his way was the best in the world. So, the next day, and the next, he renewed the attack, receiving always the same answer, though a certain expression of her face, that he caught occasionally, made him think she was not so obdurate as she would have him believe. But on the fourth day, something happened that, for the time, rendered love-making impossible. Miss Frances, going into her father's room, found the poor old gentleman dead in his chair, with

something of the old dreamy smile on his face, that he used to wear when Winston first saw him. During the next few days of confusion and distress, both women looked to Cousin Charles for counsel and sympathy. They found him as kind as a woman, and the most thoughtful of men. After Mr. Hathaway was laid away in the wilderness of a graveyard, close by, Mr. Winston held long consultations with Miss Frances, and afterward with the creditors, whose indulgence could not last much longer. Miss Frances returned to her old anxious cares for the morrow, and Anastasia went about with a grave face; while Cousin Charles lingered on, day after day. Everybody seemed taking it for granted that he would stay, and meantime there was a certain softening of Anastasia's manner towards himself, which awakened a glow of delightful expectancy, that made him think this place the most fascinating spot on earth.

One morning, while he was busy with some old yellow papers, that Miss Frances had brought for examination, Anastasia came softly into the room, carrying in her hand a great fragrant rose of Damascus, whose color paled in contrast to that which suddenly burned on her face, as he looked up with an ardent glance. An intuitive perception made him aware that she had come to make a confession of some sort.

"Well," he said, with suppressed excitement in his tone.

"Well," she answered, with a little half-frightened laugh, "I—I want to tell you something—I mean—"

She faltered and paled; but seeing him spring up, with a sudden flush and tremor, she instantly grew calm again, (it is the way with women,) and resumed her old dignity of manner.

"Cousin Charles," she said, "you have been kinder to us than we had any right to expect; we never can repay your kindness."

"You can, if you will," he cried, "you know how."

She waved him to silence. "Then you have not changed yo' mind?" she said, very gravely. "You still think you would like me for yo' wife in spite of my being foolish, and ignorant, and high-tempered?"

"High-tempered? I never said it."

She went on without heeding him: "Well, I wonder at your choice. I thought you had more taste. But if you still insist—I want to pay our debt. I can't bear to owe anybody in the world; and I can't pay it anyway but this. That is," demurely, "if you will take me, sir."

"Sweetest—take you, Soft-Eyes—take you?" And he rushed forward, with hands outstretched.

But she retreated, putting her own hands behind her.

"Don't be absurd," she said, severely; "I feel it my duty to tell you now, that I don't believe in men loving twice. I take you because I can't help it, and not because I believe you love me," dodging behind the sofa as he pursued her. "And I'm high-tempered, as you said," still retreating, and making a motion towards jumping out of the window as he followed; "and am sure to give you a heap of trouble. I know I shan't like any of the people you know; city-bred ladies—and I don't think they will like me; and that will make you feel uncomfortable, won't it?"

"Oh, confound it!" said he, "I don't want you to like anybody but me. Don't be so tantalizing. Give me a kiss. Gracious heavens, don't I deserve it, Soft-Eyes? Don't I?"

She still kept retreating. "You say, though I don't believe it, that you love me better than anything else in the world."

"Good Lord, have I not told you so fifty times?"

"But perhaps sister will object; you must ask her leave," with provoking gravity.

"She does not object at all; she is kinder than you." Cousin Charles was now on the verge of distraction.

Suddenly her whole tone and manner changed. "Am I unkind?" she said; "I did not mean to

bo. Don't you remember I said once that I would be hard to win? I'll tell you something I would never have told anyone to save my life—but—but *now* I know you are in earnest. I like you—I don't know if it is love, cousin, but I—I have liked you so for a long time—there!"

During this confession she had changed suddenly from a queen to a handmaid; she grew red and pale by turns; her eyes were more lovely than ever, through the tears that filled them; the hand she held out, with palm upturned, in such graciousness of sweet surrender, trembled shyly. The siege had been long; the terms of capitulation were decidedly favorable to the conquered; but it was a surrender, after all; and doubtless Mr. Winston's heart beat with triumphant excitement, as he advanced to take formal possession of this fair fortress. Perhaps, too, it was not only a hand-clasp that she gave; he had said that he deserved a kiss; and perhaps she may have granted him one—just one. Who knows?

Pshaw! Love-scenes are exceedingly tiresome to all but the actors themselves. Nobody likes to feel *de trop*; it's the most disagreeable thing in the world, and not even atoned for by the gratification of one's curiosity. I wonder if Miss Frances felt the sensation when she paused, for a moment, at the parlor door; then, seeing what she did, decided not to go in, but went softly away again.

MY COUSIN MAUD.

BY MARGARET SUTHERLAND.



I CANNOT better tell my story, than by making a few extracts from my diary.

DECEMBER 1st.—Only seventeen days since I last wrote in this book—only seventeen days since I sat by mamma's side, and felt her soft hand on my forehead, and her kisses on my face. And now she is gone forever. How can I bear it? I have just come from the graveyard on the hillside. I am alone. Oh! my mother, my mother.

I am going away, too: perhaps, will never see that grave again. The day she died, mamma called me to her. "My dear," she said, "here is a letter, that came recently. It is from your uncle in England. You already know that I married against my father's consent; married a poor musician: and that I was disinherited. So, we came to America. I have never regretted

my marriage, my dear; except for your sake, as it makes you poor. While your father lived, I was happy beyond words. Since his death, I have been happy with you. But when, a couple of months ago, the doctor told me I could not live, the thought of leaving you penniless was too much for me. I wrote home, therefore, asking that help for my child, which I had not solicited for myself, in all these years. For answer, came this letter. My father is dead, but your uncle promises to take care of you; and to him you must go: here is a bill of exchange he has remitted to pay your expenses. There, do not weep. I shall soon rejoin your dear father. God's ways often look mysterious; but they are always right: and the time will come, when we shall be able to see it. Farewell! My only pang is in parting with you. But, He has said that He will watch over the fatherless." The next day, she died. To-morrow, I start for England.

DECEMBER 16th.—Hylton House, Warwickshire.—I seem like one in a dream. Can it be that I am really in the house where mamma's girlhood was passed? My uncle, Sir Henry Hylton, is just such a kind-hearted man as one would suppose from his letter. He took both my hands in his, when he met me, and looked at me, without speaking, for a few moments; then said, softly, "You have your mother's face, my child," and kissed me. Could I help crying? It was at the station that he met me. The drive through the park, which is very extensive, was beautiful. The sun was just setting. Snow lay on everything. We could see the deer in the distance: in the shelter of the hollows, were the partridges: away off, it seemed a mile and more, was the stately old Elizabethan house, its gables just peeping above the trees.

My aunt and cousins met me at the hall-door. The mansion, as well as the park, is larger than I had expected; but mamma was always very



reticent about her English home. I had no idea my relations were so rich, or so grand. Aunt Isabel is very beautiful, and very stately; and my cousin Maud, who is about my age, is like her. Then there are Edith and Annie, who are younger.

I am tired; but, oh, so thankful not to hear the sound of the cruel sea. No doubt, mamma has been in this room, many times; and, to-morrow, I shall see the garden she used to play in, and

hall is fairly lit up with the glossy leaves, and bright berries of holly; and the great pictures in the drawing-room hang under wreaths of it. All the pictures, save one: that one, a portrait of mamma, when she was only sixteen; such a beautiful, happy face, with great brown eyes, and sunny curls. Over that one, I saw uncle Henry place a wreath of pure white roses. Oh, my mother, lying under the deep snow, on the far New England hillside, would you were alive!

MARCH 20th.—I awoke, this wild March morning, and realized the solemn fact that I am growing old. I am eighteen, to-day! Aunt Isabel has given me a beautiful ring, set with pearls; and uncle Henry, a lovely locket, with some of mamma's hair in it. Edith, Annie, and I, had a long walk this afternoon. The wind blew almost as keen as in the woods of New Hampshire. But, down by the sheltering hedges, we found great bunches of primroses; and on the sunny banks, were quantities of blue violets. We gathered handfuls. How different is an English spring from a New England one.

APRIL 19th.—Such a lovely day! Uncle Henry took Edith and me to Warwick, this afternoon; and we had a delightful drive. When we returned, Annie came to my room, in a great state of excitement, to say that young Lord Allwyn had called, and was going to stay to dinner. "Is he?" I asked, indifferently. "You remember that place, out on the Brierley turnpike," said Edith, in reply, "where there are such splendid great stone lions on the gateway? That is Allwyn Park, his home. But, he has been traveling on the

the old avenue she told me of, where she was so fond of walking. We did not approach the house in that direction, it seems: there are two approaches, as in all such stately places. Poor mamma, what a life hers must have been, after she married, and left all this wealth and state, for the poverty of our New England home!

CHRISTMAS EVE.—How strange it all seems. Here I am, in my pleasant little room. I have said good-night to uncle, aunt, and cousins. The house is beautifully decorated for Christmas; the

continent, for a long time; and only came back a few days ago. He's a great traveler, and a particular friend of papa's. Only twenty-five, very rich, and handsome as an Apollo, and the Duchess of Clemence's favorite nephew. And his mother was a Duke's daughter, you must know."

When I had braided my hair in one great braid, and twisted it around my head, and fastened it with a jet star, I put on a black silk, trimmed with crape folds, and declared myself ready to go down and meet this paragon.

"You look just lovely, Katharine," exclaimed Annie. I must say, I blushed with pleasure; for

I feel glad that even Annie likes my face; for Maud is very so lovely, that almost anyone is plain beside her. Maud was especially beautiful to-night. She wore a rich purple silk, cut square in the neck, and filled in with lovely white lace: her hair was drawn up high, and lay in great coils around her head; except one long curl, that fell nearly to her waist. After dinner, she sang several of those tender old ballads, of which she is so fond: and my eyes filled up with tears. I think Lord Allwyn is her lover: he seemed so attentive to her. He really is very handsome, too: with dark eyes and hair. Edith says



his mother was the most beautiful woman of her day, in all England.

JUNE 4th.—Elmwood.—I am enjoying my visit very much. The Duchess of Clemence lives here. She was an old friend of my mother, and she talked a long time, this afternoon, and told me more about mamma's girlhood than I had ever before heard. She is loud in praise of her nephew, who took me in to dinner to-day. The Duchess, and her daughter, Diana, are anxious to have me stay a week longer; and Lord Allwyn seconded their wish; and I have almost promised that I will.

JUNE 10th.—Edith and Annie drove over to-day, and brought word from uncle Henry, that I was to come home, in three days, at farthest; for there was a new horse in his stables, which did not belong to him, and he wished me to find an owner for it. How kind he is! The girls were in ecstasies over the horse; they said it was such a quiet, pretty, brown-coated little thing, and its name is Mab. I am quite anxious to see it; for it is for me.

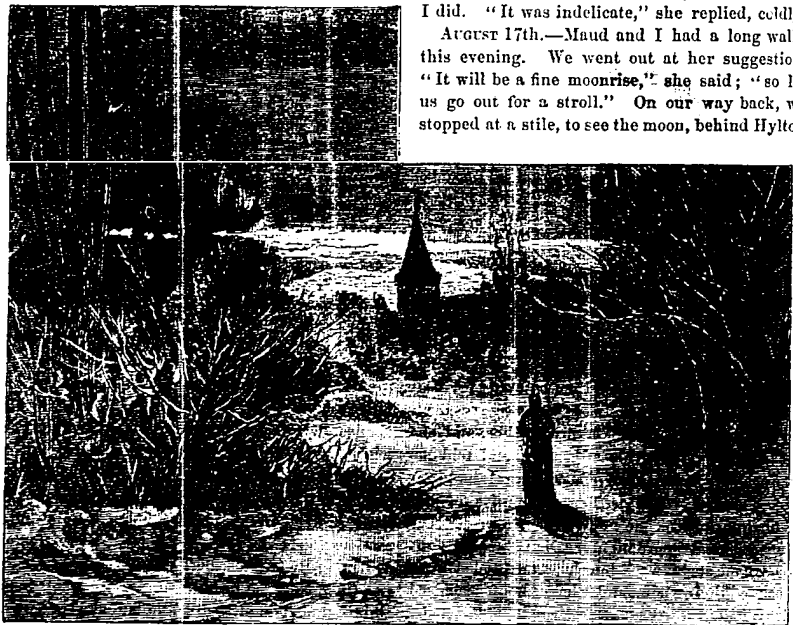
Lord Allwyn was here this evening. He is certainly very agreeable, and I cannot help liking him, though I think he laughs at me; or,

at least, at some things I say; for, once or twice, I have caught his dark eyes fixed on me, with such a peculiar expression in them. He thinks, probably, that as I came from America, I must be a sort of semi-savage.

AUGUST 14th.—I am very unhappy. I have offended aunt Isabel. It was so warm, this afternoon, that I strolled down the old avenue, to seek the shade of the great trees. I took, with me, Mrs. Browning's Poems. It was very still there, and I stopped at a spot, a long way from the house, and sat down on a little bank. After I had read some time, to myself, I became so interested, that I began reading aloud, unconsciously. I read "Bertha In The Lane," "The Lay Of the Brown Rosary," and one or two others; then, with all the pathos I was capable of, I read the "Rhyme Of The Duchess May." Just as I had finished, I heard a voice behind me, saying, "I do not think it quite honorable to listen, Miss Sinclair; but, I could not speak, till the poem was finished." I turned, and saw Lord Allwyn. "How long have you been here?" I asked. "I have been up to the house, to call on you all, and took this old avenue home as the shortest," he said. "I came on you unawares. I have been here ten minutes, at least. You like Mrs. Browning?"

I was angry. Listening, unannounced, for ten minutes! Hearing me make a fool of myself with my enthusiasm! Instead of answering his question, I told him that I thought he ought to have spoken at first, or else have gone on to the house. He said he begged my pardon, very sincerely; and that he would never so offend again: all in such a ludicrously solemn tone, that, at last, I could not help laughing. Then, we began to talk about Mrs. Browning's poems; thence to others; and, before I thought of dinner-time, it was half-past six. I hurried back, and Lord Allwyn came to the porch with me. He would not come in, however. Dinner was nearly over, when I entered the dining-room. Uncle Henry laughed, and asked where I had been; but aunt Isabel did not say anything: she only looked "unutterable things." After dinner, when we went into the drawing-room, she began to talk to me about the great impropriety of my remaining so long with Lord Allwyn, alone. "Young ladies don't do such things, in England," she said. It seems that Maud was so anxious about me, that she went into the hall, to see if she could discover any signs of her dear cousin, and she saw his lordship coming toward the house with me. Aunt Isabel didn't accept my explanation as sufficient. In vain, I said I had not supposed there was any harm in what I did. "It was indelicate," she replied, coldly.

AUGUST 17th.—Maud and I had a long walk, this evening. We went out at her suggestion. "It will be a fine moonrise," she said; "so let us go out for a stroll." On our way back, we stopped at a stile, to see the moon, behind Hylton



Hall; it brought out, in such bold relief, the quaint gables and the picturesque skyline of the roof, that Maud said: "Let us wait here, awhile, and enjoy the view." But, I soon found that it was not to watch the moon, that she had stopped; but to tell me about Lord Allwyn. He had spent the morning at the Hall, while I was out riding; and he had entertained them, it seems, with a description of my reading, last Tuesday. He says he never heard anything so absurd, as the tone "Toll Slowly" was repeated in. Maud quoted a verse or two, that he had repeated to her, mimicking me, to show her how I read. My lord, she said, had declared it was "so absurd."

I had thought, before this, that he was a gentleman. And Maud! Does she suppose I have no feelings? It was cruel to tell me. Lovers might have found something else to laugh over, something else with which to amuse each other, than the mistakes of a poor, orphan girl.

I heard them singing, this morning, as I was taking off my habit; for the drawing-room windows were open; I could hear his lordship, plainly.

"Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, hath flown."

I hate that song, even if it is the sweetest love song in the English language, as someone says it is. I will never read the "Rhyme Of The Duchess May" again.

SEPTEMBER 12th.—Annie, Edith and I met Lord Allwyn, when we were returning from our walk, this afternoon, and he turned and walked home with us. It was the first time I had seen him, except in aunt Isabel's, or Maud's presence, since the day I amused him so much, by reading "Toll Slowly." Almost the first question he asked me was, if I had read the "Rhyme Of The Duchess May" very lately. I retorted, "No," rather crossly. He laughed, and said he believed I had never quite forgiven him for listening. Just before we reached the lodge gates, he began to praise my pretty Mab, and asked me to ride with him, to-morrow. I gave the first excuse I could think of. "I cannot ride well enough. Uncle Henry is teaching me," I said. "Let me take Sir Henry's place, to-morrow," he urged. "I will watch you as closely as he possibly could." "I would rather ride with uncle Henry," I said, shortly. Annie and Edith were a few steps in front of us, and Lord Allwyn bent down to say, in a low tone: "May I ask why you refuse to ride with me?" I answered: "Is it necessary for a lady always to give her reasons?" He drew himself up, proudly. "I beg your pardon," he said, "Miss Sinclair. No, it is not."

That was all. But of course he will never

ask me again. How fortunate it is that Maud told me what she did, or I might have gone with him, to-morrow, and innocently enjoyed myself, only to discover, afterwards, that he found many *absurd* things to repeat to Maud.

OCTOBER 9th.—Uncle Henry is still very kind. But, I am sure aunt Isabel and Maud do not like me. Went for a long walk, this afternoon, across the fields, and through Hazelwood copse. I went alone, for Charlotte Morgan came, just as Annie and Edith were starting with me; and, of course, they turned back. I was glad to be alone, for a little while; and, after I had passed the copse, I left the footpath. I was tired, and I believe I shed a few tears, as I looked to the hills beyond. A little later, I was startled by hearing footsteps near me; and turning my head, saw Lord Allwyn. He had his gun and game-bag.

"How lucky I am," he said. "Are you alone?" I said "Yes," and moved away, but he followed, saying: "May I walk back with you?"

I remembered his insulting words about my reading, and also what aunt Isabel and Maud had said; so I answered: "I prefer going back as I came, alone." He raised his hat, said "Good-afternoon," and turned away.

I wonder what I am crying about, now? I had better close this book, and go to bed.

NOVEMBER 4th.—I cannot understand Maud and Lord Allwyn. I was surprised, when he said, a week ago, that he was going to Italy, for the winter. Have Maud and he quarreled? To-day, I was in the drawing-room; when he came to say "Good-by." He shook hands with Maud, quietly; but, he must have been strongly moved, nevertheless: for, when he came to me, just after, his hand was cold as ice.

DECEMBER 16th.—A year, to-day, since I came here. It is a wild, dreary night. The wind moans through the trees in the park, like a Banshee. I am glad, there are no pine trees here. Anything but the sound of wind among pines. The ground is covered with snow, as it was a twelvemonth since. In the distance, across the park, I see the church-tower. A solitary figure is making its way towards it. I suppose it is one of the rectory servants going home. How dreary everything looks! How lonely! Yet, I am lonelier still. No one here loves me, unless it is uncle Henry, for I do believe he cares for me a little. But Maud grows colder and colder, daily. I heard her talking to Captain Danton, yesterday: they were looking at me; but averted their eyes, when they saw they were observed. I suppose Maud was telling him how Lord Allwyn had ridiculed my reading. I

must ask uncle Henry to let me go back to America. I could teach school there, or find a situation as governess; and I should be better, if I had something to do. It might enable me to forget. If I could only lay my head on mamma's lap, as I used to, and feel her soft hands stroke back my hair—my mother—oh! my mother.

APRIL 10th.—It is a long while since my last entry; and great events have happened in the interval. It is Maud's wedding-day! How lovely she looked, in her bridal whiteness. Captain Danton is very proud of her, and no wonder. I shall think of her, not as the beautiful bride, but as the pale-faced girl, who came to me, last night, after the great clock in the tower had struck twelve. She knocked hurriedly at my door, and when she came in, I thought she was ill. She had on a blue wrapper; and a soft white shawl was drawn closely around her shoulders; her beautiful hair was all unbound, and her face was whiter than I had ever before seen it.

"What is it, Maud?" I said. "Are you ill?" "No," she answered; "but I have something I must say to you." She stopped, for a few moments; and then went on. "I fear I did you a great wrong, once, Katharine." "When?" I asked, surprised as much at her manner, as at her words.

"Perhaps, after all," she said, wearily, "it is not so bad as I feared. Do you remember the night, last summer, when I told you how Lord Allwyn had laughed about your reading?" "Yes, I remember," I said. "Well," Maud answered, "I don't know how I did such a thing. I think I must have been mad. But I thought, before you came, that Lord Allwyn loved me—"

She broke off, here; and began to cry. I had never before seen Maud shed a tear. Finally, she sobbed out; "He never said what I told you, Katharine. It was all false. I was jealous. He said your reading was wonderful—that he had never heard anything like it. I know it made a difference—oh, Kate! forgive me."

What could I say to the shivering, sobbing girl? I begged her not to think of it, any more. But she would not be satisfied, until I said that I forgave her. And I did forgive her. But it was a long time, before I could finish the prayer to be forgiven as I forgave. It was only a little thing, but what a difference it made! How little cause I had to treat Lord Allwyn as I did. Maud does not love Captain Danton, I am sure; she is marrying him out of spite; but, perhaps, she will learn to love him, by-and-by. He is very fond of her, and a really good man.

JUNE 22d.—Annie's birthday. Such a perfect June day. The fête was a great success. Just

before supper was announced, Lord Allwyn, unexpectedly to everybody, made his appearance. How glad all were to see him. No one had heard that he was about to return. What made me blush, as he came up to speak to me? I could have cried with mortification. He told me he had met Maud and her husband, at Florence; he said he envied Captain Danton, the latter was so very happy.

But I must not sit up longer, writing; for my head is aching. I cannot forgive myself for that silly blush. I wonder if he noticed it?

JUNE 27th.—The picnic at St. Catherine's came off, yesterday. We had a lovely morning for our long drive, and I think we all enjoyed it. We visited the chapel, and the well, before luncheon; and afterwards, the rest of the ruins, going one by one into the haunted chamber, and down into the great vault under the chapel.

Lord Allwyn drove me home. I was surprised, when he asked if he might drive me back to Hylton House; so surprised, that I did not speak for a moment. He smiled a little, as he said: "I hope, this time, you are not going to refuse."

It was a long drive, for he went around by the Brierley turnpike, to show me the great Brierley oak, and—No, I can not write about it, though every word and every look will live in my memory forever.

Peace and happiness—happiness, such as I never dreamed of—have come to me. Gerald, Lord Allwyn loves me. He says he loved me, the very first time he saw me, and I—I am his promised wife. The only reference he made to the past, was to say: "We can forgive your cousin Maud, now; can we not, Kate, dear?" By that, I know that Maud said something to him, when they met at Florence. That is why he came back.

When we passed by Allwyn Park, he drew rein before the great entrance gates, and bade me look at my future home. It was through a mist of happy tears, that I saw the grand old pile, with its ivy-clad walls, and massive porches, while the last rays of the setting sun lit up the upper windows, and shed a softened light on the great tower.

Then I turned to look at the man beside me—the strong, brave man, who loves me—and in my heart, I asked the question: "What am I, and what have I done, that such happiness should be mine?"

Lady Diana is to be one of my bridesmaids. The Duchess has written such a kind letter. "I loved your mother, my child," she says, "but I love you even more; and am so glad you are to be my niece."

NOT UNCOMMON.

BY ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

"You will not like this nephew of mine," Agnes said. "But you must tolerate him, for my sake, while he stays."

"And why, pray, do you make an assertion like that?" queried Mrs. Belford, toying with the rings on Agnes's hand. "Is he so very disagreeable?"

"Oh, no, indeed," Agnes hastened to reply. "He can be very agreeable, and, as I have told you, he is quite my ideal. Yet he has a cold undemonstrative nature, and, as you are so warm and full of sweet emotion, I am sure he will impress you unpleasantly. He often makes people think he dislikes them, because of his reserve. I am sorry he is so shy. It would be pleasanter for you, otherwise."

"If he were one who would button my gloves, you mean," she said, "and hold my fan, and turn a delicate compliment. Oh, dear, no; I do not want that sort of thing here, Agnes. I came to you to rest—body, heart, and brain—and I am quite willing to get away from all the frivolous follies of the fashionable world. But how old is he?"

"Albert is twenty-five. Rather peculiar, too: rigid in his ideas of propriety; very severe in his judgment."

"Has he ever been in love?"

"Not that I know of. I really wish he would lose his heart: it might do him good. But he finds young ladies either too bold, too frivolous, or too silly. He has some high and impossible ideal of female divinity in his mind, some perfect paragon of virtue, propriety, and modesty, for whom he is waiting."

"Poor thing," sighed Agnes, as her friend went to her room to dress. "What a pity she is not appreciated at home. She is just starving for affection."

Mrs. Belford was thirty, looked twenty, and was dowered with those magnetic charms and intangible graces which are so much more powerful than mere beauty, at least when coupled with tact and taste. She dressed exquisitely; understood the art of pleasing and seeming pleased; read character swiftly; and was a thoroughly charming woman.

Wedded to a practical matter-of-fact man, who gave her no sentiment, but plenty of money, she supplied the restless cravings of a hungry heart

and romantic mind as best she could. She had met Agnes in Florida, the previous winter; the two had become friends; and now she was paying a visit to Agnes, at the latter's country-residence.

"I am sure not to like her, Aunt Agnes," Albert said, frankly, a few hours later, hearing her description of Mrs. Belford. "A woman who roams around the world without her husband, and goes to balls and theatres without him, is not my ideal. Or one who permits other gentlemen to admire her—and you tell me she is much admired by gentlemen."

"But her husband will not go out with her," his aunt explained. "He cares only for business, and the races, and his dogs. He abominates an opera, has no ear for music, while she is music-mad. Moreover, she occupies a social position which compels her to entertain and be entertained. She went South to escape a Northern winter, and Mr. Belford insisted upon her going; yet he would not accompany her."

Twenty-four hours later, Alfred was not hostile to Mrs. Belford. She had fathomed him at once, and, playing the part of innocence and modesty, had subjugated him at a single interview.

"She's not a bit forward, but very modest and gentle," he said to his aunt, "and she has a pathetic look in her eyes, which makes me feel sorry for her."

"Sorry for her?" Alas, poor Albert! Sympathy is the first step toward the abyss of folly, with many men, at least.

Day by day, this practiced coquette wove her web more and more closely about Albert.

"I am sad, this morning," she said, a fortnight after that first meeting, "because my life is so unfilled—so void. I married, when a mere child, a man without one taste in common with me. He gives me a house, but not a home. He gives me jewels and gold, but no affection. My heart starves, and I try, as best I may, to make life endurable. And I have been so happy here—oh, so happy! I dread the thought that I must go away next week."

"Next week? You must not—shall not," Albert answered, and took both her hands in his, to give emphasis to his words.

She withdrew them, with a pretty little shake of the head. But she did not go away the next

week, or the next. And all the while poor Albert fell deeper into "the pit she had digged for him."

He was sitting on a low ottoman at her feet, in the twilight, one evening, when she renewed the subject of her going. She felt him tremble, and the hand that she reached down to take in her own was cold.

She was stirred by the dramatic situation. Mrs. Belford was very fond of the dramatic, on or off the stage.

"I want you to forget whatever has seemed too frank in my manner," she said, in a half-penitent voice. "I do not want you to despise me—"

"Despise you? Great heaven! I worship you," he cried, wildly. "I could die for you."

"Hush!" she said, softly. "Do not die for me, but live. Live wholly worthy of this beautiful and sacred experience, which has come to glorify all life for me, and, I trust, for you also. Take this," she slipped a circle of gold upon his finger, "and never remove it until my image is displaced in your heart."

"It will never be removed, in life or death," he said, solemnly.

"I hope not. I believe not," she responded. "Yet, if you ever cease to worship and revere my memory, take off the ring. If you ever grow to love another woman better than you love me—do not, dear, let the ring remain. But, so long as I am a power and an influence in your life, wear it, and kiss it every night ere you go to sleep. We may never meet again. But it is an unworthy love which cannot be true through separation and silence. Good-bye, and heaven bless you."

In the morning, she was really gone. She had grown tired of the flirtation, and chose this dramatic way to end it. Her poor dupe missed her every hour. Yet he was in that exalted state of brain and heart where no actual physical presence was needed to make him happy. A whole new world, a heaven, had opened to him, during the last few weeks.

He had viewed women from a distance always, and knew them only as he read of them in books. Now, suddenly, a fascinating, lovely, and accomplished woman had crept into his heart, opening all its windows and doors to a flood of light. A sudden ambition seized him to become distinguished for her sake. Life opened before him with new possibilities. He wanted her to feel a pride in him: to give him respect and admiration as well as love. He felt all his former ideas of life changed and transformed by this experience. He had charity now for the whole suffering

world; he was at last, he said, akin to all humanity. Every night he kissed the little ring, and breathed a silent "God bless her!"

A year went by, and then there came to him an intolerable and unconquerable desire to look upon her face once more. They had never exchanged one word or line, in all this time; but Albert had kept himself informed of her welfare, through his aunt. Agnes was with her now, at the seashore. It was quite the proper thing, he said to himself, for the nephew to join his relative there, for a week or two.

Mrs. Belford was out walking when he arrived. He had sent no word to his aunt of his anticipated visit. But he asked her, Agnes, eagerly about her friend. "Is she well? Does she seem happy?" he said.

"Yes, she is well," his aunt replied. "And she ought to be happy, if adoration and attention make a woman happy. She wins all who come in her way, and I am as infatuated as the rest," she added, laughingly.

After a time, Albert strolled into the billiard-room, to kill time until Mrs. Belford should return. A bevy of men were chatting together, at the opposite end of the room. They were discussing the billiard-strokes of a man who had just left.

"But he is no better than Charlie St. Clair was," said one, "before he deserted billiards for beauty."

A laugh followed this sally, and then another added:

"Charlie is perfectly infatuated with Mrs. Belford. I hope he will not make such a fool of himself as young Holly did, last winter. Holly was betrothed to a lovely girl; but he neglected her shamefully, after Mrs. Belford wove her toils about him. He really fancied, for awhile, she would obtain a divorce from her husband, and marry him."

"How does Belford like all this?" queried the first speaker.

"Oh, he doesn't seem to take it much to heart. She married him for his money, in the first place, and he really loved her, in his way. I think he was of a domestic nature, and would have liked a quiet home-life with her. But her nature craved excitement and admiration; she enjoys dramatic situations, and must have them. And so he lets her go her way, and he goes his. She amuses herself with each new candidate for her favor, and, when he becomes troublesome, she coolly disposes of him."

Albert went out upon the shore, his head in a whirl! How could the sky stand, the sun shine, the breakers roll, after such profane untruths had

been spoken of his darling? For he felt sure they were untruths, the results of malice.

He took the path along the edge of the cliffs, which were about twenty feet high, and almost precipitous. But there was a comparatively smooth beach below, and one of some width, especially when the tide was out, as now. Little winding paths, and occasionally flights of steps, led down to the beach, every few hundred yards; and it was a favorite resort for lovers.

Suddenly voices sounded near Albert, apparently beneath him; a man's voice first, then *hers*. He looked over the edge of the cliff. Mrs. Belford was sitting on some rocks, just below, on the beach. Further out, a solitary pedestrian was visible, on an almost isolated ledge: beyond him, a sail; and then the illimitable horizon. The scene never left his memory to his dying day. He could also see Mrs. Belford's companion—a handsome blonde-bearded man, who looked down at her adoringly. She was speaking:

"I married, when a mere child, a man with no tastes in common with myself. My life is sad," she was saying, "and void. He gives me a house, but not a home. He gives me jewels, but denies me the affection I crave. I try, as best I may, to make life endurable. And now I want to live worthy—I want you to live worthy—of this beautiful and sacred experience, which has come to glorify life for me, and, I trust, for you also. Take this," and she slipped something into his hand, "and never part with it until my image is displaced in your heart."

Albert could bear no more. It was just what the false siren had said to him. She said it to all. He rose and rushed past them, and strode hurriedly out of sight.

An hour later, when Mrs. Belford returned to the hotel, she found its inmates in a state of great excitement.

"A young man, a stranger, who had arrived

a few hours before, had just tried to commit suicide by shooting himself," they were saying, "but had only succeeded in making a very ugly wound in his side. The ball had been extracted, and he was not in danger of death. No one was quite sure of his name."

Mrs. Belford said "Poor fellow!" and was passing on to her room, when she met Agnes, pale as death.

"Why, what is the matter? Are you ill?" she cried.

Agnes looked at her with sad heavy eyes.

"Don't you know?" she answered. "Albert is here. He has tried to kill himself. I find this upon his table, addressed to you. Oh, Mrs. Belford, what has come upon my dear boy, to make him so rash and reckless?"

Mrs. Belford, now trembling in every limb, opened the parcel. It contained only the ring. The ring so dear to Albert—that had been treasured like a sacred talisman for a whole year—the ring which Mrs. Belford had actually forgotten she had given to him, until now it was returned to her under such tragic circumstances.

Mrs. Belford's love of the dramatic was gratified to its fullest extent, for once, at least.

The story leaked out, however, and Mrs. Belford had to leave the seashore, her reputation for a heartless coquette fixed forever.

As for Albert, though he is restored to physical health, his heart is seared and his soul embittered forever.

He laughs at love. He sneers at loyalty. He feels no faith in woman, young or old, wedded or single.

Possibly the future holds for him, in store, some sweet and holy experience, which shall restore that ruined faith; but even that cannot undo the wrong inflicted upon him by the selfish vanity, the heartless cruelty, of one wicked woman.

OUR TELEPHONE.

BY LUCY LEDYARD.

"ONE, two, three, four—one! One, two, three, four—one!" rang out our telephone, in spiteful tones, while I ran upstairs, two steps at a time, to be in season to answer the imperative summons.

My husband was away from home, and I felt a little nervous in using the unaccustomed instrument myself. With a shaking hand I moved the switch, applied one ear to one orifice, my mouth to the other, and said in as bold a voice as I could command:

"Who is it?"

Back came the response, in a thready whisper, like the ghost of some defunct grasshopper's chirp, "The Central Office! A telegram for Mr. Lawton has just been sent here, with the request that we should telephone it to his residence out of town." We lived, in a pretty village, I should remark, at some distance from New York.

"Very well," I respond, "what is it?"

"Dear cousin," (do you understand)—"yes, go on please"—"expect us this afternoon at four. Margaret Dinsmore." Do you catch it all."

"Perfectly, thank you."

"Good-afternoon."

"Good-afternoon."

"Well, if that isn't just like a man! I mean the ordinary run of the animal," I say to myself. "But then my husband is not one of the common herd; he is usually more considerate. The idea of inviting company, and never saying a word about it, and he away, too! But, ah! I see now! It is a sudden idea! The dear fellow thinks I'll be lonely in his absence, and has invited his two old aunts, of whom he has so often told me; with the funny little gray cork-screw curls, and old-maidish ways; and who always call him 'cousin.' Well, I'll not be behind him in good feeling. The dear old ladies shall have the two east rooms, adjoining each other; and I'll give the order for their favorite 'yarb' tea, for a nightly potion. And let me think. What other peculiarity have they? Oh! they always forget their caps! So I will have two nice old-lady caps, ready to cover their dear, bald, old heads, the moment their bonnets are off."

These thoughts had no sooner passed through my mind, than I hastened to act upon them. I tripped down the stairs, to give my orders to the kitchen deities, laying particular stress on the

herb tea, to be carried punctually to the old ladies' rooms at nine o'clock, without any further directions from me. For I took it for granted that all old people kept early hours. Next, John had his directions to go to the depot, to meet the old ladies, and be particularly careful in assisting them off the cars. Pleased with myself and my hospitable intents, I returned to our cosy, upstairs sitting-room, and whiled away the time of waiting, in putting together two very decorous, spotless caps of the whitest, sheerest muslin. I had set the last stitch, when I heard the rumble of wheels, and a few minutes later, John was at the door, and helping two ladies to alight. Their heads were tied up in thick veils (the weather being dry and dusty) and their loose-fitting dusters would not allow me to see what sort of figures they covered; but I caught sight of a dainty little foot, as one of them sprang to the ground, and mentally ejaculated, "Good heavens! I wonder if I can jump like that, when I am seventy-five!"

In two minutes more, I found two plump arms around my neck, a rosy cheek against mine, the most perfect mouth in the world put up for me to kiss; and this vision of blue eyes and golden curls flitted away from me, only to give place to another of a different type, but no less bewildering in beauty; this time with chestnut-colored hair and eyebrows.

Before I had time to collect my scattered senses, the brunette exclaimed, "Why, what does it mean? Cousin James told us you were about fifty; and when we asked him how to address you, he said we should call you 'aunt;' it would be more respectful, and that you were particular about such little things. Oh! what a wretch! Won't we have our revenge on him, though, for not letting us know he had married a young wife! And here you are, the dearest, sweetest cousin in the world, and not much older than ourselves! Isn't it perfectly jolly? Oh! please what is your name, and what shall we call you?"

"Cousin Helen, dears," I said, as soon as I could recover from my astonishment; "and I was never happier in my life, than in seeing you, this moment, though I don't even know your names, and much less, why in the world 'cousin James' *shouldn't* marry a young wife!"

"Oh! do please excuse our rudeness, aunt—I mean, cousin Helen," said the older of the two girls—"of course there is no reason why he shouldn't marry a girl of sixteen, if he wished. Only, somehow, we had formed the idea that he would prefer some antiquated individual. And here you burst upon us, like a young rose, and we are as delighted as surprised."

We were friends from that instant.

Kate and Margaret soon slipped from my lips as easily as "cousin Helen" from theirs; and half-an-hour had not gone by, before we had sworn eternal friendship.

The afternoon sped swiftly away. My guests were duly refreshed after their journey. How merry we were! Suddenly, Kate cried: "What pretty old lady's caps!" for she had espied the contents of my work-basket. "Does your grandmother, perhaps, live with you? I do hope so—I love old people."

I burst into a fit of laughter, that made my listeners stare at me, as if I were suddenly taken insane. But they joined in it, a moment or two later, when I explained the delusion I had been laboring under, in regard to their years.

"So, now we are quits," I said; "and here comes your 'yarb' tea, which my husband has often told me was indispensable to your night's rest." And a fresh explosion of merriment was the consequence of this speech.

I slept, that night, with sweet girlish laughter ringing through my dreams like a tangle of joyful Christmas bells. I had so dreaded my husband's unaccustomed absence. He had a perplexing lawsuit on his hands, and had such a grave face, when he kissed me good-bye, that I had almost a presentiment of evil, which was now thoroughly banished by the presence of these lovely, light-hearted girls; and it was such a relief.

The next morning, three bright faces met at the breakfast table. If Paris himself had been present, he would have found it difficult to decide to which of my two visitors, to award the prize of beauty, they were so equally matched in loveliness, though entirely unlike in style. So merrily passed the meal, that we all declared it only needed my husband's presence to make it quite a heaven on earth. I had never had any sisters, and now realized what my life had always lacked, the sweet feminine companionship of those near my own age. Embroidery, chat and books, whiled away the morning, and a drive took several hours out of the afternoon.

But, after tea, "when came still twilight on," and we three were sitting close together in the

deep recess of a bay window, the quiet of the hour and scene induced an exchange of those little confidences, so dear to the feminine heart; and Margaret said in her arch way, "Do you know, cousin Helen, we have a confession to make to you? We seized upon cousin James' invitation, as a deliverance from an impending evil at home; and choose to come and see you as a *lesser* evil; but, oh! how glad we are now to know and love you, and you will forgive us the injustice we did you, will you not?"

"Yes, a thousand times yes, my dear girls," I replied. "But you have excited my curiosity. What was the impending evil?"

"Oh! the old story: two ancient lovers, with long pedigrees, heavy money-bags, *le sabre de mon père*, etc.; and a match-making aunt, who is determined to marry off us two portionless girls at the earliest opportunity; a double edition of King Cophetua and the beggar maid. My aunt had summoned her forces, the two kings, and we two beggars ran away; and now we throw ourselves on your protection."

"And you shall have it," quite warmly responded I. "No sordid-minded aunt shall sell you for gold, if I can prevent it. Oh! dear! there goes that telephone. Sometimes I wish it were out of the house, the perpetual ting-a-ling-ling makes me nervous. Listen! Is it for us? One! two! three! four!—one! Yes, I must go."

In a few minutes, the two girls heard the following interesting and one-sided conversation, conducted through the instrument.

"Hallo, hallo—ye-es—I understand—no—I did not catch that last word—yes—to-morrow? Do come home as soon as you can, and see your charming visitors. I do miss you so. Good-bye!"

The telephone was in the upper hall, and on re-entering the sitting-room, I exclaimed: "What do you think, girls? I have had a talk with James. You know he is away on business, looking up witnesses, or something connected with an important law-suit: he was in New York again, between two trains, and had just time to telephone to me. He sends his love to his cousins, with strict injunctions to have a good time, and be sure and stay till his return; and he also told me if anyone—a gentleman, in appearance at least—should present himself here, to-morrow, to detain him till he comes, as he is a witness he wishes to see at home. But he added that I had better look out for the silver, as the man is not to be trusted. James hopes to be home himself, to-morrow night, but says I must keep his messenger here, under any pretext.

I am sorry to oblige me to receive such a visitor, but it is important to gain his good will. Oh! girls! I am so glad you are here! What should I do with such a dreadful man to entertain all alone? I do hope James hasn't a cold; his voice was so gruff, I never should have recognized it."

The following day we were on the *qui vive*, awaiting the arrival of our dreaded guest. I scrupulously counted the silver, and took note of all my portable possessions, that I might at once detect the loss of any of them; and I cautioned my fair cousins to keep their trunks well locked.

Our hearts beat a little faster, when the door-bell rang, and two cards were brought up "for Mrs. Lawton," bearing the names of Mr. Harry and of Mr. Fred. Singleton.

"Worse and worse, girls," I cried, "there are two of them! What did James mean?"

"Singleton!" exclaimed Kate and Margaret together, on seeing the names. "What a coincidence! That is the name of our would-be adorers. Doubleton, I think it ought to be."

The gentlemen, (and certainly in manner they were, every inch gentlemen) were speedily shown into our presence. We were freezingly dignified at first, as the memory of their light-fingered tendencies recurred to us. But their agreeable conversation finally got the upper hand, in spite of this consciousness.

"I hope we have not intruded, in your husband's absence," said the elder. "But he urged us, so cordially, to come, saying he himself was to be here almost immediately, that our scruples were quite conquered. I suppose you received his letter and our own, preparing you for our invasion."

The coolness of the smooth-tongued villain, I mentally ejaculated, to myself. But I answered, politely, "My husband telephoned me, but I have not received any communication from you."

"Perhaps we should more properly have gone to a hotel," added the other, deprecatingly.

"Oh, no!" I said, quite cordially, remembering my husband's injunction, and trying to atone for my previous chilling demeanor. "We are very happy to do our best to entertain you, till my husband's return."

As the afternoon wore on, our distrust of our two visitors, in spite of ourselves, melted away, under the genial influence of their conversation; and I could not but confess, that if they were villains, they were most delightful ones, with eyes as true and honest as any I had ever seen. But I had great faith in my husband's penetration, and so I resolved to be cautious.

To break up the monotony of the long afternoon, I finally proposed croquet on the lawn;

and here our strange guests appeared to as good advantage as in the drawing-room; playing a skilful, magnanimous game; taking no unfair advantage of their opponents.

As my husband did not arrive, that afternoon, I had rooms prepared for the Messrs. Singleton, devoutly hoping, however, they would betake themselves to the hotel in the village. But while these thoughts were passing through my mind, as if in rebuke, came "One! two! three! four!—one!" on the telephone, and my husband's voice—unmistakable this time—telling me he was driven to death with business, and should not be at home for a week; also that I must be sure and detain our visitors till his return; but that if I continued to think them so charming, he should be jealous. Before I could reply, some one interrupted us, and all communication was cut off for that time.

"Umph! now he says visitors," I exclaimed, "and before it was only one. And how can he be jealous of these two, dear girls? I believe, like noble Festus, a good deal of law, if not a little learning, has driven him mad."

I can hardly tell how the days of that week passed; but they sped away on golden wings, apparently to all but myself. I, however, held the place of an observant and anxious looker-on; and was often nervous over the little drama being enacted before my eyes. It was a theatre, in which my sitting-room, drawing-room, the piazza, croquet ground, the woods and lake constituted the scenery. Certainly, too, the actors performed their parts well; and as though their hearts were in their work. Mr. Singleton, the elder, was well supported by my pretty brunette; and my fairy Kate was equally well supported by Mr. Fred. Singleton. "Oh! if my husband would only come home," I thought "and out of his wisdom, decree what should be done to set things straight!" The worst of it was, my sympathies were all with the lovers; and prudence seemed to fly to the winds, whenever I saw them together. For instance, when Kate's soft cheek would take on a rosier hue, as Singleton, the younger, approached her, I could not help wishing he were indeed a suitor nobly born, he looked so worthy of her. And when I saw the face of beautiful, stately Margaret hang out a flaming banner, while Singleton, the elder, quoted Tennyson to her, I thought, oh! if you were only as rich as you are handsome and good! Oh! horrors, *good*? That unlucky thought brought back, by force of contrast, my husband's caution; and I counted my spoons, that very night, and was quite relieved to find that not one was missing.

The next day, at twilight, I overheard Harry Singleton say to Margaret, "'Now comes still evening on. And all the air a solemn stillness holds.' Will you not walk out on the lawn with me?" A certain deferential tenderness was in the tone and in the manner; and this made me feel that the fateful hour had come with them. When, shortly after, the younger brother invited Kate to row on the lake with him, my heart gave a great thump; for I knew that the spell of love was on them, too. All this going on in my house! Two lovely, innocent girls, about to throw themselves into the arms of two scoundrels. Gracious heavens! What would James say to my allowing Kate to engage herself to a thief, and Margaret to a pick-pocket? It was too dreadful! Why could I not find some way to put a stop to such disgraceful proceedings! I was at my wit's ends.

It went from bad to worse. That very night, the two girls came to me, and whispered their confessions, with many tears and blushes. They loved, and were beloved. But, oh! how unwisely and unfortunately, I thought, after what James had telephoned me.

"And what did you say to them?" I asked, in breathless horror.

"We told them to wait," said the elder, "till cousin James should come. There was something to be explained, we hinted; for we were afraid of what you would say. But, oh! cousin Helen, we know they must be as noble as they seem. I am sure our instincts can not be so far wrong, as to make heroes out of those who are unworthy a woman's esteem. We were prudent, you see, all the same," she added, triumphantly, "for we told them to wait!"

"Wise little girls!" I said. "Second Solomons! That is just what I should have counseled. Somehow, I cannot think of these young men as villains. If so, they come disguised as angels of light."

That night, there was a fire in the neighborhood, so alarmingly near, that our two male guests arose, joined the crowd in the streets, and did a noble night's work in assisting to put out the fire, and in saving the lives of a little girl and an old, decrepit servant, at the risk of their own. Our heroes said not a word of their exploits. But we heard their praises rung afar and near, in the course of the next day or two. Margaret and Kate exultingly asked:

"Are not our instincts more correct than the evil report of man?"

"What, when that man is my husband?" I retorted, maliciously.

Just then the telephone summoned me more

imperiously than ever, it seemed to me; and I recognized, with joy, my husband's voice.

"My dear," he said, "I have only time to say, send John for me, please, to the station, at two, to-morrow afternoon. I shall be with you so soon, that I will wait, till then, to tell you how good it will seem to be at home again. Good-bye."

The next afternoon, I was impatiently waiting my husband's return, and looking out of the window, when the carriage rattled rapidly up, and in a moment more, he was alighting.

"Who is that?" exclaimed the girls.

"Your cousin James," I reply, hastily running to meet him, while I heard them wonderingly say: "No, that is not our cousin James!"

And now for the last act in the drama.

Another carriage arrives, and Mr. James H. Lawton, (my husband is James A. Lawton) with another elderly gentleman, and two elderly ladies, appears on the scene.

"Good heavens! there is aunt Maria," cried the two girls, in a breath, "and papa and mamma. And see, there is cousin James, too! What does it mean?"

"It means," and just then there was a parenthetical shaking of hands, various introductions, and the arrival of the Messrs. Singleton before the foot-lights. "It means," said the other Mr. Lawton, "that there has been a grand mistake somewhere, and we have all been playing in a Comedy of Errors. A letter came to light this morning, which had been lying at my office during my absence, and which my wife, thinking it was for her, opened. Judging from the contents, it must have been written to Mrs. James H. Lawton, in acceptance of an invitation to visit at her house by the two Mr. Singletons, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting before, and now I must apologize for an absent-minded mistake of my own. Our telephone number is fourteen. I had occasion to telephone to my wife one day, about a witness, who was to meet me at my house; and in my haste reversed the strokes, so that I summoned forty-one instead of fourteen. It was only on my wife's taking me to task for sending her such a disagreeable caller without any warning (as she thought,) that my stupid blunder flashed into my consciousness. And now to explain about my young cousins here, Kate and Margaret, (as I seem to fill the post of general enlightener on this occasion.) We had invited them to make their first visit in our new home, and had received no reply to our letter. It was only the fact of home letters accumulating for them at our house, that at last made me anxious, and induced me to telegraph to their

parents, to ascertain the meaning of it all. As you see, my telegram has given me the pleasure of a visit from Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Maria Dinsmore, who came at once, to look after their lost lambs. After the various mistakes that have been made, resulting from the similarity of our names, it suddenly occurred to me, that I might hear something of our runaways at your house, and here they are to be sure! and so I come to carry them home with me."

"Oh! no! no! Mr. Lawton," I exclaimed, "do not be so cruel, just as I am in the full enjoyment of my new-found treasures, real, live cousins, as I thought, to take them away from

me. I will propose a better plan than that; you must all stay and take tea with us, to-night; you must indeed, and leave these truant damsels with us a few days longer at the least."

Pending these speeches, there was a very cordial by-play going on, between "aunt Maria" and the two Singletons; and finally it all came out: these cousins of my husband were the very "braw woovers so ancient and rich," whom aunt Maria favored.

So all the complications of the preceding fortnight ended well; that is, in two engagements, followed in due time by a double wedding; and all owing to "OUR TELEPHONE."

POLLY.

BY MRS. R. HARDING DAVIS, AUTHOR OF "MARGRET HOWTH."

CHAPTER I.

"LET us go down the by-road, Pratt."

"Just as you please, Polly."

"Everybody that meets us looks as if they knew we were going to be married to-morrow, and were on our way to look at the house."

"Do they? I wasn't thinking about them. Take my arm, little girl."

Polly put the tips of her fingers on his arm, but though they were in the shady lane, where the locust trees nearly met overhead, and the grass was green, and as soft as a mole's back, and though they had walked there every night this summer, and had some sweet, silly remembrance for every old tree, or mossy stone, she walked stiff and silent behind him, her thoughts evidently far-off. She seemed to have forgotten all about the lane, and their love as well. Polly thought a good deal lately of what people said, Pratt remembered, with a vague feeling of annoyance. But he forgot it in a moment. Little jealousies or trifles of any sort did not often trouble his careless, large, sweet nature. He had not looked forward, either, to this day for months to let anything worry him in it now. He took her hand in his, bending down to look under her sun-bonnet.

"I'm right anxious, Polly, to know what you'll think about the house. I think it was a prudent thing for us to do. Johns—the builder, you know? Well, he advised me to wait awhile. 'In a year or two,' he says, 'you'll be a boss carpenter, and then's your time to buy houses and marry a wife.' These old fellow's are always for dragging back."

"I've no doubt Mr. Johns gave you very good advice," dryly.

"Polly!"

"I never made our marriage a question of dollars and cents. It is you who are doing that."

But Pratt was the worst fellow in the world with whom to pick a quarrel, or make a scene. The astonished, hurt look was gone from his face in an instant, and he walked on in silence, only guiding her more tenderly. She was a bit nervous, that was all, and no wonder, slaving on that sewing-machine.

"You won't be tired out this way, Polly, when I have you?" he said, gently as her

mother might. "Well, I was going to tell you about the house. I kept one thing for a surprise till to-day." (The surprise was not going off as successfully as he had expected, somehow, but he would not see that.) "I couldn't buy it out and out, you know, but I've got a lease on it for five years. What do you think of that? It'll go hard, but I'll make it the sort of home we want in that time, and then it will be ours."

She made no reply. He repeated, "Ours. You don't seem to understand, Polly."

"Oh, yes, I do!" rousing herself. "I'm very glad, Pratt."

"I thought you weren't listening. Well, don't walk so fast; don't look at the house till I tell you," speaking thick in his hurry and eagerness. "I went to work the very evening I got the lease. We're off work in the shop by six, you know, so that gave me nigh onto two hours of daylight. That's what made me late comin' to you some evenin's, hey? I used to go back, too, and do inside jobs after I'd left you. Sometimes, I'd get that occupied workin' and thinkin' how it was all for us, that the mornin' 'd catch me. But it's done, now." He clapped his hand over her eyes until he had led her round the turning of the lane, and then took it off. "Look at that! Trig as a trivet! New wood and paint inside and out, and it cost nigh onto nothin'!"

"It's very nice, Pratt. It's very nice, indeed."

To some people the little, cheap house, back among the currant-bushes and hollyhocks, might have seemed a poor object for Pratt's triumph. What Polly thought was hard to tell. She looked at it calmly. If there were any shrewd contempt latent in her violet eyes, stupid, good-humored Pratt was the last one to see it.

"The best of it is, that I saved all the money for furnishin'. We counted on some of it goin' for whitewashing, and the like. But I've done that all myself. I was determined you should fill the house with pretty things. You shall have everything you like."

"For a hundred and fifty dollars!" she said. But no sooner were the words spoken than she

caught his arm, her face scarlet with shame, the tears rushing to her eyes. "Oh, Pratt! how good you are to me! To think of your working at this wretched little house, while I— Poor fellow! Poor fellow!" She sat down on a log and hid her face in her hands.

Pratt looked down in utter consternation, touched her bent head, began to chew the ends of his red cravat violently. "Tut! tut! Now, Polly, Polly—what in the world? Well, just cry it out, then. You women hev heaps of trouble that we don't understand, and whenever you hev, why just you cry it out." He walked away, and came back once or twice. "I won't be jealous or suspicious, don't be afeared, nor think you rue—you couldn't rue, you know. You love me," stopping short and looking down at her steadily.

Her sobs suddenly ceased, but she held her face still covered by her hands for a few moments. When she looked up it was beaming with smiles, and her beautiful eyes sparkling inside their dark lashes.

"Of course, I love you, you foolish fellow. What a dreadful way you have of hinting at rueing, as if matters had reached a life and death pass between us. Come now and show me the house. I was just a bit nervous, nothing but that." She clasped her hands over his arm, nestling more closely to him, looking up in his face, and chattering and laughing so incessantly that Pratt's heart was in a tumult of surprise and delight, as they went slowly across the potatoe-field to the house. She never had dropped her strange, sweet shyness before, never had shown him so fully how she loved him. Yet he could not forget, dull as he was, that she was bitter with discontent a minute ago.

"I know the house is a poor place, after all," he said, anxiously. "But I want you just to look at it as home, as I do. It's the first either of us ever had, that's what I think of," lowering his voice. "I don't suppose two people ever growed up with less friends than you and me. We come up like two weeds, with neither plantin' nor waterin'."

"Oh, you forget! There was a difference between us." She could not keep the angry twang out of her voice now, though she smiled as sweetly, and her soft eyes were as brilliant as before. "You were an orphan, to be sure, Pratt, but your folks are among the best stock in the country; and I—well, God knows who I am! My mother died a beggar in the alms-house. Everybody knows that, at least."

Pratt laughed. "When we were hired at

Squire Farndyce's together, there did not appear to be such a difference between us, Polly. What ails ye to-day? Ye're as bitter as hoarhound." He opened the little gate. "I often think it was curious we hed the chances we've hed, bein' only farm hands. I've got my trade, and you—" He hesitated, suddenly remembering that he was on dangerous ground. "Well, you had that year with the Levistons, and it made another girl of you, Polly, after all."

"Yes, it made another girl of me." She was standing behind him in the little porch, while he unlocked the door. Something in her tone made him turn and look at her; but her bright face reassured him.

"That's the only time," he said, cheerily, tapping off his words with the key on his palm, "that I gave you up, Polly Warner. When we was that little even, I'd begun to think of this day. I've been ploddin' away at two or three notions all my life, and one of them was that you belonged to me. I'll never forget the morning I heard some city folks, going to the asylum out of curiosity, had seen you and carried you off. I did not wonder, seeing your pretty face, they picked you out of all the others. It was jest a whim, though, I reckon; that Mrs. Leviston was full of whims, they say."

"It was not quite a whim. She thought I looked like her daughter, who was dead, and she meant me to take her place." Pratt turned again to the door, but Polly went on deliberately. Some secret train of thought seemed to lend a force and weight to the subject, which it had not for him. "She adopted me legally: there were papers drawn between her and the managers; she changed my name to her daughter's—Laura Leviston. That was what they called me in that year, Laura Leviston," repeating the name as one does a chance bar of music, which brings up some old memory.

Pratt threw open the creaking door, rubbing his finger along the paint to see if it had dried thoroughly. "I tell you now, Polly, that's good poplar. It's been seasoning these three years; I got it from Johns. Laura, eh? And then she got tired of you in a year, and sent you back. That's what I can't understand, Pussy, how anybody could get tired of you."

"I don't think she was tired." Polly had sunk down on the bench outside, and was looking dreamily over the meadows, without a glance at poplar or paint, though the door was Pratt's master-piece, which was the reason he lingered by it so long, in hopes that she would notice it.

"She wasn't tired of me. She was very fond of me. I did the best I could. I studied hard. But she was going to her brother, who was ill in France. She meant to come back in a month or two, but she was prevented. She never meant to give me up; she wanted to make a lady of me."

"Is she dead?" which question was prompted by sheer politeness in Pratt, who was very tired of the subject. What did these old affairs matter when life was beginning all fresh and new for them to-day?

"No. She's not dead."

"Well, dead or not, it's lucky she never came back. We wouldn't have been together to-day, Polly. Shall we go up stairs first, or into the kitchen?"

"Into the kitchen; there's where I'm to live." Then catching his eye, she added, smiling, "I'm going to be such a busy little wife, Pratt."

Pratt went before her, nothing doubting. All the eagerness and expectation of these months of preparation, flashed and throbbed now into reality for the poor fellow. Pratt was known in the village as one of the steadiest and most reliable men in it, a trifle quiet and dull, perhaps, but with plenty of downright hard sense. Nobody knew the man as he really was but Polly, or as she might have done, if her soft violet eyes had been a whit keener. To her alone he talked his heart out, showed that it was as full of fun and tenderness as a boy's. It is oftenest reticent, sensible men, like Pratt Ogilby, who put their lives into a woman's shallow hand to do with what she will.

He led her about through the kitchen and chamber, the sitting-room, and spring-house. There was not a nook or a corner in which he had not framed her, as he worked, and fancied how, at this first visit, she would blush and smile, and glance shyly at him from under her curly lashes. She was lovelier than ever before, and full of bright coquettish ways. She praised all he had done fluently and unstintingly. But she was self-possessed as any fine lady, pleasantly bent on making herself charming; she did not blush, not even when he kissed her. This was not the little girl, who, for two years, had been saving his earnings for him, counting eagerly how far they would go to buy all they wanted; who used to walk with him in the evenings, glancing anxiously in at the shops and china stores.

Fight against it as he would, Pratt was chilled. But he was more tender than before. Polly had the dyspepsia, or headache, or

"nerves"—some of those mysterious feminine ailments, yet new to him. He must begin to make allowances for them. When they came into the little, vacant hall, he saw how pale she was. "In a week this will be our home, little wife," he said, heartily, holding open the door for her to go out. But she stopped, coming close to him, and looking him steadily in the face; then she put her arms about his neck.

"Yes, it will," she said. "There's nothing on God's earth I wouldn't give up for you, Pratt."

CHAPTER II.

It was only a letter, open on the sewing-machine, yet Polly sat before it paralyzed, looking at it as though it were something alive. The thick, satiny paper, with the far-off scent of violets hanging about it, the few words traced on it in a free, bold hand, had converted the little room, with its plain bed and bare floor, into something miserably mean. Not the room only! But her whole life, her home with Pratt, all his hopes and plans; how paltry it all was, and pitiable! She took the letter up and read it again. She had done little else but read it for the last two days. Of course, she would not go! She would sacrifice herself to her love for Pratt. But it could do no harm to look at all she was giving up. She read aloud the few words of endearment. "My child." "My Laura." "I am childless, if you will not come to me." The hot, vain blood quickened in Polly's veins. It was no whimsical, fashionable lady who thus singled her out, and called her, but an old woman: and one, Polly was shrewd enough to know, of a most rare and fine type among women. She had been a child when she had known her, but a child's instincts are quick, and leave deep traces; and Madam Leviston, with her white hair, her keen, commanding eye, and her low, sweet voice, had left in Polly's memory an impression of grandeur and purity, unshared by any other of the coarse world of men and women.

She reigned an absolute queen, too, among people to whom Polly was but as a servant of servants. She was alone, without an heir; there were beautiful, high-bred girls who would have been glad to become her favorites.

"And yet she chose me!" thought Polly Warner. "There must certainly be something in me like herself, and different from other women."

She did not put the thought into precise

words, but her head was tossed, and her cheek burned. This was a different appreciation from Pratt's, who would coolly sentence her to work in a kitchen for the rest of her life.

"Laura!" She repeated the name again and again. It was a pass-word that opened a new life to her. She put both hands over her eyes, to shut out the whitewashed wall, the little chicken-yard outside, and, worst of all, the glittering plate of the machine, with its eternal tick, tick, over which she had been stooping now for years. She saw instead, green, sunny slopes dotted with forest-trees, exquisite gardens, stately-towered walls, that to poor Polly's small experience seemed those of a palace. "And I was the little mistress there! I was Laura!"

There was nothing to forgive in Madam Leviston's desertion of her; that was quite clear to Polly, though the confused explanation of the letter might not have made it so clear to anybody else. She did not perceive that it was by accident only that she had met the great lady again, who had been visiting in the neighborhood for some weeks without, apparently, any remembrance of her old protégé, or desire to find her until she saw her in the village church, and had been affected, as before, by the curious likeness to her lost daughter. Madam Leviston had the faculty of giving to even her written words some of the force and magnetism of her personal presence. Strong men and women of culture acknowledged her power. No wonder, then, that the ignorant little country-girl thrilled and warmed under her words as she had never done even for her lover.

The letter was answered. When Pratt brought her home that morning, after looking at the house, she had nerved herself finally to write. She was going to be married to-morrow, she told Madam Leviston. "Her husband would be a poor man, and she would be poor. She supposed that would be better. Riches were not for such as she. But she would always think of her benefactress with gratitude. All her life, and in her humble, wretched little home, she would pray for her night and morning, and thank God for allowing her to have known a woman so great and good." When she had thus poured out her soul, she dipped the pen in the ink to sign the letter—Polly. For one minute honest nature triumphed. What were these people in reality to her, who made her the subject of their caprice? They were not of her kin nor kind. She was only Polly Warner. It was the name by which Pratt

had known her—the name he would give his wife.

But for once, for the last time, let her dream her delicious dream. She wrote "Laura," and then she sent her letter.

When it was gone, when she had fairly made the sacrifice, she felt she had a right to approve herself. She sat all day in the hot glare of her little chamber, the untouched work yet on the bed. Her wedding-dress of white muslin was all ready, but there were the pillow-slips yet to hem, for they were going to housekeeping immediately. How mean and paltry was all this preparation! She turned her back on them, and with the letter clasped to her bosom, and the perfume of violets filling the air, she sat lost in her passionate dream.

Madam Leviston, meanwhile, discussed the letter of Polly with her friend and confidant, Col. Archer.

"There is something very pathetic to me in the child's wail over her lost chance in life, and very heroic in her refusal," she said, with a half sad, half amused smile. "Read it, colonel, and tell me how it impresses you."

The colonel obeyed. "There is no use in frankness upon this matter with you, madam. This unfortunate likeness to Laura blinds your judgment of this girl now, precisely as it did five years ago. Now these emotional influences don't weigh a feather's weight with me, in subjects of practical bearing."

"But the letter—the letter?"

"It is an essentially vulgar letter to me; it is full of the vulgarity, not of education, but of nature. All that this Laura, as she calls herself—"

"I call her so," under her breath. "When I give her that name I feel for the moment as though my Laura was not dead."

"I understand. But because of a mere trick of nature in features and eyes, you are going to take this girl to your heart who is sure to bitterly disappoint you. I was going to say that the only question which your offer suggested to her, as is evident from her letter, was riches or poverty. Your love or you count for nothing."

"Yet she chooses poverty. Even by your own showing there is a capacity for heroic self-sacrifice in her."

"There are not many women who are both base and bold enough to break off their marriage on the wedding-day, and acknowledge they did it for money."

Madam Leviston laughed, idly tearing bits from Polly's letter.

"You never liked my little girl, colonel. She writes a delicate, well-bred hand, eh? What a dainty Ariel she was! The only really violet eyes I ever saw. Did you ask in the village what manner of man it was she is to marry?"

"A carpenter or blacksmith; that was all I heard."

"Tut, tut!" the color rising in her withered cheeks. "In a few years she will be a slatternly, worn-out woman, with half a dozen children dragging about a kitchen after her. And so like Laura that—— Why they might have been twin sisters!"

Col. Archer shrugged his shoulders, and made no answer.

"It cannot—it shall not be!" she said, decisively. "The child's heart is broken. I see that in her letter. She is giving me up to keep her promise to this boor. I have the right to interfere, and I will do it. Did you not know that there was an agreement drawn up between me and the Managers of the Asylum," answering the colonel's surprised look, "constituting me her guardian until she was twenty-one?"

"They may suggest that you have not observed your agreement, with any great amount of zeal, for the last five years."

"People, in a country village like this, are not apt to make nice distinctions in the law," smiling. "At any rate, I shall forbid the bans to-morrow."

There was a short silence. "Pardon me! but are you going to make this Miss Warner your heir?"

"By no means!" promptly. "My will is already made. I simply intend to lift her to the rank for which I think she is fitted; educate her, present her in society, and when she marries, I will give her a suitable dowry. Why?"

"Nothing," dryly. "Only I would mention to-morrow that she was not to be your heir."

"It would make no difference with her. You are cruelly unjust, colonel," rising to go out.

"Perhaps so," preparing to light a cigar. "But about the young carpenter—the husband? I fancy he will interfere with your plan to some purpose. A very resolute fellow, I understand."

Madam Leviston's eyebrows contracted. "He can be bought off, I presume. As for claim, he has none; I am the girl's rightful protector."

"It is a little rough on the carpenter, I think," lazily. "By-the-way, remember, the

village has small-pox, or some of those plagues, in the lower end. If you will bring the girl, don't bring that as a complement."

Madam Leviston vouchsafed no answer. She would bear anything from Col. Archer, who had been her husband's friend. The two old people usually went together on their journeys or visits, quarreled, advised, played cribbage, bickered, or talked sentiment, uncensuringly. They were now, with two or three others of Madam Leviston's usual suite, visiting Mrs. Alston, whose country-seat lay just outside of the village. The old lady met Mrs. Alston in the hall.

"We must leave you in a few days, Elizabeth, positively," she said. "I have just recovered an old protegee of mine, and I will not be content until I see her in my own home. A perfect gem of human nature, but in the rough, my dear—of course, in the rough. But I feel like a lapidary, when he first takes up the uncut stone. I am in haste to begin to work on it."

"What a generous, fine old creature she is!" thought Mrs. Alston, regarding the old lady's flushed cheeks and eager eyes, as Madam Leviston went down the hall.

CHAPTER III.

PRATT stood by the window watching the town clock, which was on the stroke of nine. He had been up twice to see Polly that morning, but she had refused to come down. "Tell him," she said to Mrs. Hart, with whom she boarded, "that I will be ready at nine. But let me be alone until then."

"The child's poorly," Mrs. Hart added, severely, on her own account; "it's nerves. A woman's married but once in her life, and she can't go through it as unconcerned as if it was the buyin' of a dress."

Pratt went off, feeling cowed and rebuked.

It was to be the quietest of weddings. At nine they were to walk down to the parsonage, where the little pastor, Mr. Hovey, would marry them. Then they would get into Joe Barker's hack at the door, which ran twice a week up to town, and take their two days' holiday, in which time the money was to be laid out. The money for home! Pratt turned over the new, crisp bills again and again. How long they had been saving it, penny by penny! How much it would bring! All the solid furniture, that would last their lives; and the pretty little trifles beside, that would make home homelike for his darling. "I'll add to it every

year," he thought, anxiously. "Polly likes things pretty about her."

It was to be a quiet wedding. Yet there was none which the village took closer to heart, or rejoiced in more. Everybody was concerned about Pratt's marriage. He was such a hearty good fellow! He had done some odd job, or bit of kindness for everybody. The ladies at the squire's sent him word they had a package of napkins for his wife; and Jones, the store-keeper, gave him a hint not to invest anything in a carpet. "Your boss 'll see to that. See that ingrain? Real Scotch. How'd that look on a certain house, eh?" Poole, the cabinet-maker, had called him in that morning to look at a set of chairs, stained so that no human being could tell them from walnut. "I don't say who they're for," with a wink, "but I don't forget odd lifts you've give me, Ogleby." Poole's wife (who was so famous for her oiled plums) had told him that some of the old ladies like herself wanted to send a jar or two of their own putting-up for him to try, as soon as his pantry-shelves were ready; and everybody knew what her "jar or two" meant. Even the "jours" in the shop had clubbed, and bought him a new set of tools; and the boys from the school hung round the door, watching him as anxiously as if he had been a brother of their own. When his black leather-bag of clothes was packed, there was a fight as to who should take it down for him.

"Now I never did anything for them little chaps but play an odd game of marbles with them. It's curious what a little thing 'll make people friendly," he said, to himself.

All the pleasure and good-will that ever had been in Pratt's life, seemed to have come back distilled into a warm cordial that was held to his lips to-day. The day itself even was unusually clear and bright: a warm, south wind blowing over the freshly-mowed meadows, and rustling the apple-trees about their little house yonder.

"Will be home there in a week," Pratt whispered to himself, as he put on his hat and went down the street. His heart beat so fiercely, and his eyes were so dim, that he could not see people nodding and smiling as he passed.

The clock struck nine. Since he was a boy he had been waiting for this hour. He opened the door of Mrs. Hart's little boarding-house, and went in, not seeing that Judge Alston's carriage and horses stood in the street. The parlor-door was open; there were several people in the room, but he saw only Polly, who came to him half-way, and stopped. She

had on her traveling-dress. There was a strange look in her eyes, as if death had been at work with her. In all his life he never forgot that first glance on her face. It seemed to him he never had seen it before. Every trifle, even the pink moss-buds, he remembered afterward, nestling in her hair.

"This is my husband. This is Pratt," she said.

"Why, Polly! What ails you, child?" putting out his hands to her.

But she drew back from him quickly.

"Ah! This is the gentleman?" said a strange voice. "Mr. —? I really have not heard your name, sir. Pardon me."

"Ogleby, madam," bowing. At the sight of the fine, thin face, and silvery hair, Pratt bowed again, smiling. The eyes were keen, and this was something in womanhood which he had never seen before. But Madam Leviston, for her part, looked no deeper than the shining, ill-fitting suit of Sunday black; the glaring cravat which he had put on to please Polly; the hair combed down on each side of his red face. Yet, with all, there was something about the young man which made her determine that it would not do to offer him money.

"I am this young lady's guardian," she said "I am Mrs. Leviston."

"Polly's?" said Pratt, heartily. "You used to take a good deal of interest, I know, in my little girl. She was talking of you only yesterday; she'll be mighty glad to see you agen on her weddin'-day. Hey, Polly?"

But the smile left his face when he turned to Polly. She had stepped behind a table, and was scanning him with keen, shrewd intelligence in her eyes. The momentary tenderness at sight of him was over; this was a stranger that looked at him, and weighed him. Some glimmer of the truth broke on him. She was choosing her fate. Now or never she would know what manner of man she was to marry.

"You mistake, Mr. Ogleby," said Madam Leviston. "Miss Warner is legally my ward. She cannot marry without my permission."

"You have not filled your terms of the contract; it is null and void. But you mean something more. What is it?"

"I mean that she shall not marry you."

Pratt laughed.

For some inexplicable reason the fine lady had suffered a strange change in both her feelings and her plans since the carpenter came in. She was anxious to show him that she had

not only power but reason on her side, and she would do it agen. That's not the pint. But if you can turn your back on me, on our weddin'-day, for the sake of money, why then it's better I knew it at once. You know what I've tried to be to you," he added, after a pause. "It doesn't need to put that into words now."

"And that other kind of life?" looking not at her, but Polly.

"That of my daughter. I offer her such ease and indulgence as I am able to command for myself. She shall have a thorough education, and be well dowered when she marries. As for my right to interfere in her future——"

"You have no right," roughly. "Only," his eyes not leaving Polly's face, "only what she gives you—Polly?"

But the girl turned sharply away, looking out of the window.

"There will be no difficulty there," said Madam Leviston, blandly. "She is not fitted to be a poor man's wife. She feels that herself. She has told me so. If you had not entered, when you did, she would have consented to go with me."

"You believe what you say, no doubt; but it is not true. She loves me."

Madam Leviston did not answer. There was a heavy silence in the room. The horses pawed without, and the wheel grated against the curbstone. A tall man, who had been leaning against the mantle, pulling his gray mustache and watching Pratt, now spoke. There was a friendly, almost confidential sympathy in his tone, as he said, addressing Pratt, "I'm afraid you deceive yourself, Ogleby. Let the girl decide."

Pratt forced a feeble smile; his eyes never left the stiff, immovable figure in the window. "Why, sir, this is my wedding-day! I've been workin' for this since I was ten year old! And this woman comes here to tell me that Polly—that my wife——" He took a sudden stride forward and wrenched the girl round. "For God's sake, speak! Put an end to this."

Polly began to whimper. She loved Pratt very dearly; she loved almost anything dearly that came closest to her at the time. But fairyland had opened its doors to her! Within, were bewildering ease and splendors, herself moving as a princess. Outside, waited Joe Barker's dingy hack, with Pratt's black bag strapped on behind. Beyond that, a life in a kitchen.

What Pratt saw in her face no one knew. He stood a moment still, and then drew slowly back from her, the color gone from his ruddy face, his voice unnaturally quiet and low.

"It may be so as that I'm mistaken," he said. "This woman has no claim on you, Polly. She

threw you off once, like a cast shoe, and she'll do it agen. That's not the pint. But if you can turn your back on me, on our weddin'-day, for the sake of money, why then it's better I knew it at once. You know what I've tried to be to you," he added, after a pause. "It doesn't need to put that into words now."

But Polly whimpered on in silence.

"I tell you, Ogleby," broke out Col. Archer, "the girl is not worth——"

"Silence! Curse you! What right have you to come between her and me? She is *my* wife! God knows whether I've mistaken her or not. It is the hour we set for our wedding, Polly," passing his hand once or twice over his dry lips. Then he held out both arms to her. "My darling, will you come?"

Mrs. Leviston had been watching Pratt closely, her mobile face changing curiously in its expression. "Of course, Laura," she said, hastily, "my offer stands as it was. I will do what I can for you. But you must judge yourself what is best for you, and for this man."

Polly turned her back on Pratt. She could not give her answer to him. "I'm sure you'll be a mother to me, ma'am, and so I'll—I'll go to you. I hope nobody will worry about me long. I don't suppose I'm worth it."

Pratt stood quite still for a minute, looking on the floor: then he turned and went out of the door without a word. Polly began to cry out loud, and wring her hands.

"You have decided to go with me, have you not? What is the matter with you?" She stroked Polly's hair. But the touch of the gloved hand was formal, and her manner was colder than it had ever been before.

"Nothing is the matter," tossing her head. "It does not cost him anything to say good-by. It shall not trouble me."

Was this nothing but a shallow, pert country girl, after all? With Laura's own tender eyes? What if she had made a mistake in this matter of life and death?

"I see nothing to detain us further," said Col. Archer. "You appear to have finished your morning's work?"

"Yes, I suppose so," with a long breath. "Are you coming, Polly—Laura, I mean? Really, colonel," as they followed the girl out, "that young fellow appears to have very fine material in him. I hope it may turn out well."

"It's lucky enough for the girl, if you give her all the finery she expects. As for Ogleby, he's had a happy riddance, in my opinion."

"Come, child," a little sharply, "are you

going without bidding this good woman goodbye? The best friend you have had? Tut! tut!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE interminable dinner was over. Polly, with a red face and aching head, had jammed herself into a corner of the drawing-room, with a book of what she called "photos." Was this ease, and indulgence, and fairy-land? She was conscious of her arms and legs, and her very eyes. What to do with them, how to use them in a well-bred way—would she ever know? When she had been stooping over the machine, or sauntering with Pratt in the evenings, she had had no thoughts of herself, except to know that her eyes were an odd, beautiful color, and her cheeks tender, like the peach-blossom. They blazed red now. She was weighted down with her lilac silk, too. She could not manage the train without a kick; and at dinner, when she tucked up her lace sleeves for fear of soiling them, she saw the footmen wink to each other and laugh. The servants all watched her, she was sure of that. There was Joe Poole, whose shirts she had made in April, was sneering at her behind her chair, because she could not use her finger-bowls. Mrs. Leviston had hired Joe, too, and he would go with them. If Pratt saw him laugh at her! But what was she to Pratt now? Nothing—nothing!

It was not these trifles alone. But these people all lived in a world of which she knew nothing. She listened to them talking at dinner as if it were in Greek. What did she know of pictures, or operas, or Ostend manifestoes? When Col. Archer kindly spoke to her, as he did oftener than any one else, she stammered and said, "I seen and I done," of which she thought she had cured herself long ago.

She had overheard a conversation, that day, between Mrs. Alston and the colonel. "The girl certainly has poor Laura Leviston's eyes," said the lady. "But that is all. I would dismiss a chambermaid who was so pert and under-bred."

"Yet she seemed graceful and picturesque in her plain dress and straw hat, as we saw her in church."

"Fine flowers look odiously vulgar out of their own ground. Poor Mrs. Leviston! She is tired of her whim already."

Polly could not tell if she were tired of it, or not. The old lady treated her with grave, distant kindness. She had bought her clothes as scrupulously as if she were fulfilling the terms of a bargain.

"You will be placed at school as soon as we return," she said.

"Why, I am eighteen. And I was always uncommon slow at books!" cried Polly, in dismay.

"I did not know you were so old," she said, quietly.

Polly sat neglected in the corner, with her hands over her eyes, staring at the book of photographs. For the first time in her life she was utterly alone: and she knew that it was a loneliness for life.

"They are not of my kin, nor kind," she thought, looking through her fingers at the quiet, bright figures moving easily through the rooms. "I am like a beggar among them." What was fairy-land, if in it she was always to be an intruder and despised?

Her brain throbbed with a sharp physical pressure, there was a heavy pain in her back and limbs. If she were ill, it would only make her a more vexatious annoyance to them than she was already. She dared not acknowledge it. She remembered now how, since she had been a child, Pratt had watched her almost like a mother. When she had the typhoid-fever, last summer, it was Pratt who paid her board and doctor's bill; and when she grew better, used to carry her in his arms every evening into the boat, and go drifting up and down the creek until she was tired. There never had been a time, that she could remember, when he was not ready and near her with his strong arm and grave, tender ways, lover, father, mother, all in one. She was beneath their servants to these people; she had been all in all to him—his darling—his wife.

But he was gone, never to come again. She knew now what he was to her: now, when her eyes were opened to see how wretched was the life she had chosen in her temporary madness.

She pressed her hands to her hot head; the pain and fever grew intense; she thought she must be dying; she would never see him again. "Oh, God! I loved him so!" she muttered.

She wakened by finding them all about her.

"Where are you going, Laura?"

"To—to Pratt, I think," and staggered, and fell. They caught her; but she heard them drawing back in fright, after they had laid her down.

"How hot she is!"

And then Joe Poole, who was in the room, came up. "The small-pox, ma'am, was raging down in the street where she lived, and this looks terribly like it."

"Oh, my children! my children!" cried Mrs.

Alston; and Polly knew that, for the moment, she was left alone.

CHAPTER V.

POLLY, of course, was sent to an hospital. What else could be done? Mrs. Leviston spared no expense in providing her with nurses and comforts; but she went on her way home. What else could she do? The attack was a severe one, likely to disfigure the girl for life, but she was in no absolute danger. At the end of a couple of months, however, Mrs. Leviston returned.

"There is no danger of infection?" she asked the matron. "Send her in then." She was determined to fulfill her engagement to the letter. When the door opened, she hurried to catch the hands of the little woman who entered. It was a stranger, she saw, not poor, vain Polly, still less the likeness of her lost Laura; but she was prepared for that.

"My dear," she said, "my dear," and then looking into the poor, plain little face, the tears came and choked her. "I've come to take you home now, Polly. We will begin all over again."

There was a new steadiness in the soft eyes, which at least were still unaltered. "You have been very kind to me, madam. But it was a mistake. I saw that before. I will not make it again."

"Do you mean that you will not go back?"

"I will stay with my own people. I am going back to my work next week. I will be as happy there as—as I can ever be again," said Polly.

Mrs. Leviston certainly experienced a sense of relief, but she did her duty, she argued and pleaded, as though her own happiness was really at stake. But Polly was firm. "I've had time to think it over, while I lay so near to death," she said, "and I'll go back to my work. I was a better woman there. It was the thoughts of money that tempted me."

Mrs. Leviston was gone at last, and the poor little girl turned to go out of the room, pausing by the door. It was a gray, windy day, the dead leaves blown along the ground. The beginning of a gray, bleak life, she thought, shivering. And so long—so long to the end!

"Polly!" The voice was close beside her.

She put out her hands. She was still weak and ill; the day turned dark about her. Some one had her in his arms holding her close and warm.

"Do not look at me," she cried, feebly. Oh, Pratt! never look at me again."

"Why, bless my soul, Polly, I've been with you every day. Ask the matron. When you came to yourself, I left you, because—because I had no share in you, you see. But I was outside there just now, waiting to come in, and I heard you make your choice."

She looked at him. "You cannot——"

"What, Polly? Do you think a woman's whim, or a bit of sickness, teaches a man's love?"

He stooped over her.

"The house is waiting there, ready to be a home for us yet. It's bin a good many years, as I've looked forard to it. My darling, will you come?"

PUT TO THE TEST.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 357.



CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning, when Burt Newton rose and looked out from his window across the sea dazzling with the glory of the September sunlight, he would have liked to persuade himself that the dreadful experience of the previous evening belonged to the visions of the most troubled night "his young remembrance could futher."

He did not succeed, however. The scene was too horribly real from the moment when Angela fainted in his arms to the closing ordeal—the last embraces from every member of the family that it had been feasible to bring forward. Not for a moment did the true-hearted fellow suspect Angela. He believed that she had unintentionally betrayed her secret, and then, in her excitement, honestly interpreted his exclamation to mean that she was loved in return. Indeed, he felt genuinely sorry that he did not love her, and was disturbed by a guilty pang when he recollected how blind he had been during the past months, though he reflected that Angela must have as completely deceived herself. It was only the abrupt announcement of his departure that had wakened her to a perception of the real

state of her feelings with such suddenness that she was completely overwhelmed.

To decide on any course of conduct was, as yet, impossible. His dazed brain was incapable of coherent thought. He turned from the window and sat down before the neglected breakfast-tray, to be almost instantly interrupted by an invasion of the younger members of the Fanshawe household. Their mother had not forgotten her promise. The twins had arrived under the guardianship of the irrepressible Graham, whom Burt had loathed from the first moment he set eyes on him. The two girls darted on their prospective relative and hugged him rapturously. Dora exclaimed, between her kisses: "I always adored you, dear!" And Flora added: "You shall be my favorite brother!" Then both exclaimed: "Burt, darling, what do you mean to give us to celebrate the occasion?"

As for Graham, while opening the door, he called: "Hallo, old fellow, I condole with you. Caught, hooked, boned, impaled—it's all up with you! Well, well, one is never safe. There was that old girl of Lady Seymour's making eyes at me yesterday; but I'm not to be had cheap—shan't go under double what she could offer."

Having expressed his adherence to the theory concerning engagements and marriage which is apparently nearly universal among Englishmen of all classes in our generation, Master Graham pounced on the breakfast-tray, ate the best of the luscious figs, and drank more than half of the cream which that luxurious dog, Burt, always ordered.

Dora finished the figs, and would have done the same by the cream, only that Graham was now at leisure to remember politeness, and bade her "mind her manners," while Flora hung fast to Burt, begged for his turquoise scarf-pin in one breath, and in the next cried:

"You'd better have waited a few years, Burtie darling, and then you could have taken me! Oh, you shocking boy, you haven't had your tea! If you are not very good, I shall tell Angela how lazy you are. I'll pour you out a cup. Sit down there and see how nice it is to have a sister!"

"No, I shall pour out his tea," vowed the
(439)

other twin. "Papa says I am ever so much cleverer than you."

"He never said it, miss! If you begin any of your crams, I'll take care that mamma allows you no pudding to-day," retorted Flora, bold and menacing in the certainty of being the maternal favorite.

The pair squabbled to get possession of the teapot, and upset its contents over Burt's white serge costume; but luckily he had neglected the beverage until it was nearly cold, so he escaped parboiling.

Then Graham scolded both girls, and Dora began to cry, and Burt was forced to say soothing things instead of shaking her soundly, as he longed to do; and she, wise beyond her years, turned her distress to account in order to obtain the turquoise pin coveted by her sister.

"I must be off," said Graham, at last. "If you two want to stop any longer, Burt can see you home."

But, crushed as he was, Burt felt there was a limit to his endurance, and answered hastily: "I can't do it; I have letters to write."

"Oh, Angela will be expecting you," the twins averred. "You mustn't keep her waiting."

"Don't forget you are in harness, old fellow!" chuckled Graham, with a satisfaction which roused murderous instincts in poor Burt's soul. Though the sweetest-tempered fellow in the world, he decided that there would be a tragedy in the Fanshawe family if the trio did not speedily depart, and he dispatched his visitors with such scant ceremony that, when they got downstairs, Graham muttered: "He's a blasted impudent Yankee, that's what he is! But he's got lots of tin and isn't stingy—there's one comfort."

"He is handsome and you're not; that's what exasperates you," rejoined Dora, with whom her brother was not a favorite. "And you swore. If you do it again, I shall tell mamma."

"Stuff!" cried Flora. "I wish I were a boy, so that I could swear too! Oh, do it more and harder, Grims—it's beautiful. And I say, isn't it jolly that we are to be rid of Angela at last? Oh, if Burt only knew what a sharp-clawed old cat she is!"

"I heard her tell Burt she was twentythree—that's his age," said Dora. "I declare, I have seen her about until it seems to me she must be a hundred. But I've forgotten how old she really is. You know, Grims?"

"Seven-and-twenty last June," replied Graham. "But mind you don't get us all into hot water by saying I told."

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Flora, with energy, "if I wouldn't be ashamed to have

fished as many summers and winters as she has, without even a nibble!"

"And only to catch a Yankee at last," added Graham.

"Everybody says Americans make a great deal nicer husbands than Englishmen," put in Dora. "Their wives do just as they please and never get scolded about the bills, and mamma knows what that means."

"Come, now step out, you two fillies!" cried Graham. "I can't waste my whole morning with you."

And they did step out, chattering amicably to a melody from "Madame Angot," which Graham whistled as loudly as if he had himself been a "blasted Yankee," though with an utter lack of ear which offered convincing proof of his nationality.

As for Burt Newton, after he had changed his drenched clothes, he left his lodgings, regardless of tea or letters. He went down to the beach, passed the bathing-establishments and the humbler straw cabins which lined the shore further below, eager to get beyond all human sights and sounds. He tramped for miles along the shore, staring blindly out at the shining laughing sea, feeling sufficiently desperate to plunge in, if only he could have found stones enough on those smooth sands to freight his pockets so heavily as to insure his never rising to the surface again.

At length, he discovered that a sun almost as hot as that of his native land was beating on his head and increasing the wild pain which throbbed there, and he had three minds to render sunstroke a certainty by reposing without his hat on the scorching sands. But he luckily remembered that he should be forced to undergo an illness before death took him, and Mrs. Fanshawe would undoubtedly insist on a right to watch beside his sick-bed. This thought caused him at once to turn back, plough his way across the beach, and seek the shelter of the great pine-forest which renders Viareggio delightful even in midsummer. He lay down in the cool shadow with his hands clasped behind his head for a pillow, gazed up at the glimpse of blue sky visible between the thick branches, and rushed from despair to rage and back again to despair, embittering his lips with those curses against himself, fate, all things, high and low—curses whose acrid taste is familiar to lips as old as yours and mine, but was new to that dainty mouth which life had hitherto fed with its choicest morsels and treated liberally to its most intoxicating draughts.

He struggled up at length and went back to his lodgings. He ate some luncheon, took a short

nap which he sorely needed, and then prepared to seek Angela. He had made up his mind in a confused fashion; he meant to tell her the exact truth. He was bitterly grieved and distressed and ready to offer any and every atonement for the blunder except—except that one impossible amend, of marrying her.

As he was crossing a stretch of shrubbery at one end of a public square, Burt perceived Mrs. Fanshawe approaching, on her road to the Neptune, the principal bathing-establishment in which people managed to idle away the greater portion of their waking hours.

A sudden thought seized the young man like a happy inspiration. He would speak to her first. He considered her not only a very kind but a very sensible woman. She would comprehend the position; even if angry and hurt for a little, she would see the justice of his explanations.

He hurried forward. The lady saw him, waved her hand in greeting, and quickened her steps. They met by the fountain in the centre of the grounds. There was nobody in sight, and Mrs. Fanshawe had her arm about his neck in a flash, and gave him a hearty kiss, exclaiming: "Oh, Burt, my son—my own dear son! Ah, my boy, you have made me a happy woman! I was so surprised at first that I could not think clearly. I had never dreamed that you and Angela were more than good confidential friends. I am so glad—so glad!"

She released him and stood smiling in his face. Burt stammered something—he did not know what, and, from sheer confusion, shook her hand again. Though scarcely so kind a woman as Burt believed, nor always sensible in her judgments and actions, Mrs. Fanshawe was a very shrewd person, especially in anything which regarded the interests of her family. Burt's pallor and the weary wistful expression of the great purple eyes fixed so earnestly on her were symptoms of danger which she caught at a glance and prepared to guard against with a readiness of wit that Angela herself certainly could not have surpassed.

"Burt, Burt!" she cried, clasping both hands over his. "Oh, dearly as your noble qualities have taught me to love you—thankful as I am to feel you are really worthy of my precious child—there is a still deeper gratitude in my mind."

"I want—I wish—I meant—" stammered the wretched youth, but she artfully interrupted him.

"I know—I understand," she said. "You mean that, if your efforts can accomplish it, she shall be a happy woman. And you will make her so: I know that too, Burt. But only think:

you spoke just in time. Yesterday morning, she told me she had fully decided to wait no longer about entering the Sisterhood. She made me promise to break it to her father. Oh, but for you, my boy, I should have lost the best, the sweetest, of all my flock. Ah, she is well named indeed—the angel of our household."

"M—marriage would be losing her just the same," stuttered Burt, with a sensation as if black waters were closing over his head.

"An ordinary marriage might," the devoted mother explained, with an ecstatic smile. "But now, instead of losing my darling girl, I gain a new son—oh, so dear, so dear! Ah, Burt, if this had not happened—if she had separated herself from us—I should have died broken-hearted. I am not strong. I should have died."

He could not force his proposed communication on her. No creature less ferocious than a leopard could have disturbed the current of that holy maternal joy and gratitude in its first outpouring.

"I—I was going to the house," faltered Burt, feeling himself a wretch of the darkest dye.

"Angela is waiting. I won't keep you. Go, my dear boy, go. A mother's blessing on you both!" cried Mrs. Fanshawe, with a sob and a smile, and off she sped at a pace quite amazing in a woman of her dimensions.

"I've only made matters worse," moaned the half-distracted Burt to himself.

"I was lucky to get away," thought the mother. "Angela will know how to manage. He may struggle a little: I think all men do nowadays—the brutes—as if every girl hadn't a right to a husband! But Burt is the kind of person to keep his word: I feel pretty sure of that. Anyway, he shall—oh, he shall!"

She passed on, triumphant and at ease, and Burt dragged his tired feet toward their undesired goal, still telling himself that it would be idiocy to become the passive victim of a blunder—that he must not and could not! All the same, he felt his aching heart sink lower and lower at the idea of dealing poor Angela so terrible a blow—he, who had never in his life wittingly hurt so much as a fly!

Then Burt was in the little parlor where he and Angela had spent so many lively pleasant hours, and, so far from finding an opportunity even to hint at his real errand, there was the young lady close in his arms again and gently sobbing on his bosom.

"Oh, Burt, Burt, it seems like a blessed dream, too beautiful to be true; but it is—it is! I see the love in your dear eyes; I feel the soft touch of your beloved hands. Oh, I am too, too

happy! And I half thought you did not care, and I was going to my Sisterhood; but yet, all the while, I knew you did love me—I knew you would speak—that you would not let me go.”

This brief sample of the capable young woman's mode of taking matters will show what a more than herculean task it would have been for any man with a particle of human feeling to tell the truth, while believing in her sincerity.

Burt went away with his chains riveted still tighter, but he did not even get to the length of his tether for many hours. He had to stop and dine; to be caressed and purred over by the whole family; exhibited at the Neptune in the evening; and, when he reached his lodgings, was too utterly worn out to do anything but drop on his bed and fall asleep.

And the next day dawned and passed, and the next, and others followed with fearful rapidity, but brought no relief or change to this wretched young pilgrim who had trusted himself with such rash confidence to the delights of foreign travel and enlightenment.

Burt was a born procrastinator. Still, he could find no cause for self-reproach when he roused up to a realization of the fact that he had been a whole fortnight an engaged man and had not yet told his secret. Indeed, it would have puzzled the keenest and most unscrupulously selfish person to discover an opportunity for presenting to notice the slightest fragment thereof.

He was actually dreading to find himself married out of hand—led bound and dumb to the altar—when a sudden gleam of hope, as bright as it was unexpected, flashed before his weary eyes.

A relative of the Fanshaws arrived at Viareggio and died in an apoplectic fit four-and-twenty hours afterward. If the man had had the decency to die before he left England, the Fanshaws would have kept silence and not allowed his decease to interfere with the securing of their prize; but now it was absolutely necessary, for decorum's sake, that the wedding should be put off a couple of months.

They all went to Florence, and Burt went also—more cheerful, more like his old self. Something would happen—he should gain his freedom; and, buoyed up by this credence, he tried to shut his eyes to his misery and gather such faint show of pleasure as he might out of the fleeting days.

“He is safe enough; you needn't fret,” Angela said to her mother, having found brutal frankness such a relief that she persevered in it, to the confusion and dismay of her parents. “If he

were an Englishman, he'd be off; but Burt has all sorts of nonsensical ideas about honor. He is dreadfully old-fashioned—dreadfully!”

“Don't speak in that terrible way, Angela—don't!” pleaded the poor mother, in unaffected distress.

“It is the truth, and you know it, and you know that I know you know it,” retorted Angela, with a reckless laugh, the more bitter because her own words stung every decent womanly feeling in her nature. “There's no use of any disguise between ourselves! Only let me alone, and tell papa to. I won't be lectured. Please remember that.”

And Angela swept up to her own chamber to cry in secret for awhile, and then emerge harder than ever from the reaction after her sense of shame and humiliation.

CHAPTER V.

ANGELA FANSHAW had at first felt profound gratitude toward the young man for holding to the pledge so audaciously thrust upon him; but it was not in human nature that this state of mind should continue. The consciousness that he suffered very soon irritated her exceedingly. She grew bitter and sore, and tried to smother her sense of shame by cultivating a contempt for her victim as weak and spiritless.

As time went on and the other Fanshaws began to feel quite safe in trusting to Newton's old-fashioned scruples, they attempted to patronize him and behave as if they considered that Angela was condescending somewhat to marry an American.

Positively, even among themselves, they persisted so strenuously in pretending to forget how the engagement had been brought about that they almost succeeded in doing so, the faint unacknowledged remembrance of the truth only aiding them to share in Angela's irritation.

Often, Burt was too miserable to pay any attention to their covert airs of superiority; often, his singularly sweet disposition kept him silent; but now and then he would growl a little and turn unexpectedly restive. In such exigencies, they grew frightened, hastily put him back on his pedestal, and burned incense before it, while Angela wept against his breast, and, taking all the blame upon her own shoulders, vowed that she deserved a beating for being so horrid and wicked.

“Girls with any spirit always are, when they find themselves bound,” she declared. “But I love you—I love you! Once your wife, you will see how dutiful and patient I am. Oh, my Burt, my king!”

so she tilted over the danger. And twice, when Burt managed, in moments of great provocation and excitement, to make an approach toward avowing the truth which was burning his lips, she scared him into silence, the first time by a fit of hysterics—and he had never seen one—the second by fainting away and then lying in a state of coma for several hours.

He was not a fool—that I affirm. She held him fast by his conviction of the sincerity and depth of her affection. He believed her when she said that she should die or go mad if she lost him, and he could not hurt her—he could not! It is absurd—it is laughable; but, mark you, it was heroism, after all. In spite of her glaring faults, he thought her true and honorable; and, since one or the other of them must become a holocaust, he deemed his duty plain.

He was a man, and the pain and suffering must be all his. No man with any gleam of honor or right feeling could break the heart of the woman who loved him—who had learned to do so through unintentional deception on his own part. But, since he had deceived when he thought his manner most frank and open, he must pay the penalty; no share thereof should fall on her, either now or hereafter.

And, as so often seems the case when fate begins to smite a human being, poor Burt appeared to be doomed to bear every fresh stroke which could render his thralldom more unendurable.

He received a letter telling him that a couple of his cousins were to leave the family party in Vienna and proceed for a few days to Genoa, where there had been established a branch of their New York shipping-house. They had some business to transact with Burt, and insisted on his joining them without delay; and Angela, finding that he would only meet two of men, submitted to his departure with a tolerable grace.

"But you must let me hear from you every day," she said. "I know how you hate writing letters, you lazy fellow; so, whenever you can't make up your mind to that task, I will be content with a telegram."

Burt promised that at least the daily telegram should be forthcoming, and so started on his journey with a sense of relief which was pleasant while it lasted: though, hours before he reached Genoa, he had become the victim of cruel self-reproach for having allowed any such sensation to possess his mind while poor Angela was pining over his absence.

It was the evening succeeding that of his arrival when one of his cousins rushed into his room, exclaiming:

"Such a lucky chance! Fred Mostym and his wife are here. You remember Clara More? They are doing Europe for a bridal tour. Just came this afternoon, and Fred saw our names on the book. Hurry up! We must go in and welcome the bride."

And presently Burt found himself in the salon of his old acquaintances, and everybody was very talkative and gay, and then the door opened and a tall slight girl entered who looked, Burt thought, with a new development of imagination which had reached him lately, like an embodiment of spring in some land where all was peace and rest.

This modern Una proved to be Fred Mostym's sister Blanche, whom Burt had not seen for five years, though as children they had known one another well. Blanche had been thirteen when they last met, and he remembered now what a sweet creature, though with only a faint promise of the loveliness into which she had blossomed.

I have no space to dwell on this episode: you can understand what would have been likely to happen. Burt Newton's stay was prolonged to nearly a week, and though, if he did not write, he sent Angela a telegram every morning, no word concerning his engagement escaped his lips to his relatives and friends.

Why it was, he did not attempt to discover; he was never introspective, never given to analyzing his feelings and turning himself inside-out for a mental review, as most people are accustomed to do. But the fact remained that, in the daily drives, walks, and excursions to picture-galleries shared by the whole party, Burt never found the moment for declaring his news, often did not remember it only vaguely as one does a chronic pain, half dulled for the time. And, when alone, he did not think much. He was usually tired and able to go to sleep—as any healthy creature is, after a day of work and pleasure mingled; and so the week drew near its end.

Burt and his elder cousin were smoking an after-dinner cigar before joining the rest of the party in the Mostym's drawing-room.

"Old boy," said his relative, suddenly, bringing Burt out of a vague dream—he who had never been given to visions till now. "I say, old boy, I am charmed to see you and our fair Blanche so quickly pick up the threads of your former intimacy. A girl in a thousand—yes, in a million! Well, I'm the last man in the world to make or mar where young people's fancies or futures are concerned; but you must fall in love sometime, and so must she. And, if you did happen to hit it off—well, you'd be a lucky

chap, and I shouldn't pity her, for you're a good fellow, Burt. You aren't half alive yet. By the time you're thirty, you'll be a splendid man, if you don't make some huge blunder."

Burt knew what he had to do—to speak, to tell of his engagement. He sat dumb, staring out at a possible future that spread like a heavenly mirage before his eyes—seeing, too, with a double sense of vision which was a horrible agony, the future that must be his.

Before he could rouse himself, his cousin was called away by a visit from his agent. Burt sat there alone.

He spent two hours by himself. They were like two years, to his fevered mind. But, when he came back from his aimless wandering through the moonlight, it was to join his friends and tell them of his engagement. No hero, this young man—no marvel of intellectual strength—but as honest and genuine as he was warm-hearted; not able to argue, maybe—to spin beautiful theories or weave passionate verse—but true to his heart's core: seeing the right so clearly that even a momentary impulse to depart therefrom could no more find a resting-place in his mind than could a temptation to lie or to steal.

But, when he joined the party, he found them in great confusion. Fred's and Blanche's step-mother was down in Rome. They had received a dispatch announcing her serious illness, and were to start by the midnight train.

Mr. Grayson and his brother had decided to return to Vienna the next morning. There was only a brief time for them all to spend together, and its duration afforded Burt no opportunity to tell his secret. But that would make no difference now. He could easily write to his relatives and—as for Blanche Mostym, how should it concern her?

While he was thinking this, she paused at his side for an instant as she entered the room after giving some fresh directions to her maid.

"As soon as mamma is better," she said, "we shall leave Rome. Perhaps you will still be in Florence."

"Perhaps," Burt answered, his voice sounding oddly in his own ears. "Perhaps in Florence."

Then came the hurry and confusion of departure. Fred Mostym was one of those men, only too common, who go frantic and drive everybody else so when starting on a journey. There was no space for connected conversation or coherent last words.

"Not good-bye, only au revoir," Blanche Mostym said, laying her gloved hand in Burt's cold clasp.

"Good-bye," he muttered, inaudibly.

Then the train started and Burt had caught the last sight of the fair sweet face. The next day, he returned to Florence and Angela—to his bounden duty and the life which stretched like an arid plain before his weary eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE day, when he went to the house, he found the feminine members of the family in a state of excessive and not altogether pleasurable excitement.

"The MacTaggart is coming," he was informed.

"And who may he be when he's at home?" Burt inquired, languidly, for his head ached dolefully, the effect of a long sleepless night.

"She's a lady," Angela explained.

"With a beard," shrieked Flora. And then all the young people laughed, but were speedily called to order by their mother, who turned toward Burt and explained, with great dignity:

"A relative on my side. She belongs to one of the oldest families in Scotland. You must often have heard me speak of her."

"Very likely," replied Burt, so carelessly that the matron was impelled to add, in her stateliest fashion:

"Though, even if you had not, I can hardly fancy the name would be new to you. I suppose that history is studied in America, and the MacTaggarts are historical."

"The girls look as if they wished this special MacTaggart were mythological," said Burt, smiling. But Angela caught a gleam in his eyes which caused her to make her mother a warning sign—this was not one of the young man's days for allowing himself to be sat upon!

Mrs. Fanshawe caught the signal with feminine quickness, and immediately began to coax and pet her future son-in-law. Burt, always ready to accept any show of apology, thought she desired to express contrition for her rude speech, and, to prove that he bore no malice, tried to feign a little interest in the personage she had mentioned.

"I thought 'The' MacTaggart meant the head of a clan," he observed. "How can a woman be called so?"

"Because she is the last of the name," Mrs. Fanshawe replied, ready to mount her grandest hobby-horse, her genealogical steed, and prance about for the American's benefit; "the sole survivor of her illustrious family."

"Oh," said Burt, merely because it seemed necessary to say something and he could think of nothing else; but the irrepressible Flora

inspired the monosyllable into an expression of contempt, and giggled anew.

"That simple article before her name," pursued Mrs. Fanshawe, glaring at her daughter, "is a more distinctive title than lord or marquis could be. She inherits that and the family estate—"

"And I wish she would stop in her tumble-down old barrack," broke in Angela. "Burt, she's the horriest, stingiest old maid alive!"

"Cease this instant, Angela!" exclaimed Mrs. Fanshawe, exasperated by Burt's laughter till she so far forgot her daughter's warning as to add: "I will not permit such language in regard to any member of the noble race with which I hold kindred. If these are republican ideas, reserve them for other ears than mine."

"Bother!" muttered Angela, darting a furious glance at her parent, both chancing to be in an irritable mood from the effects of a fierce quarrel which Burt's entrance had interrupted when at its height.

"The MacTaggart is coming here solely on our account," pursued Mrs. Fanshawe. "She desires to make the acquaintance of the man you are about to marry. I must say plainly that I hope and trust neither you nor Burt will shock her by the utterance of opinions contrary to the lofty creed in which she was reared."

"I might, so it is best that I should not meet her," rejoined Burt, laughing, though evidently quite in earnest. "May I ask when she is coming?"

"The day after to-morrow," put in the irrepressible Flora, aggrieved by Angela's passing over her mother's snub in silence. The precocious damsel had hoped to witness a battle royal. "She will only stay a week, thank goodness!"

"Flora!" began Mrs. Fanshawe, sternly; but, before she could add another word, a rapid speech from Burt froze the reproof which was hovering on her lips.

"I've been thinking of a run down to Rome," said he. "I'll take this opportunity, Mrs. Fanshawe, and so avoid any risk of paining you and shocking your relative."

If he should mean to run away altogether! Mrs. Fanshawe's blood turned cold at the idea, and she hastily prepared to humiliate herself in dust and ashes. Angela burst into tears and showed such hysterical symptoms that Burt was soon forced to renounce his plan. Then Angela rushed into her highest spirits; told amusing stories of the MacTaggart's parsimony and pride—at which her mother laughed as heartily as the others—and ended by giving a caricature of the Chieftainess, winding an antimacassar about

her head for a turban, and dancing a Highland fling.

Then she sensibly insisted on a bottle of champagne in place of the five-o'clock tea, and Burt went up from the depths of gloom into a gayety so plainly factitious that it would have been exquisitely painful to observers capable of comprehending all it covered.

The MacTaggart arrived in Florence, and Burt was invited to dine at the Fanshawes' in order to be inspected by her. It was difficult to perceive what difference the Chieftainess's opinion could make, for she had never done the Fanshawes a favor in their lives, and they well knew she never would—unless terrific scoldings could be counted as such. Indeed, she disliked the whole family, and Angela most of all. In fact, the pair had been sworn enemies since the latter, in her budding girlhood, tied a package of fire-crackers to the tail of the Chieftainess's pug-dog and set them off, nearly causing the death of both mistress and pet from rage and fright.

All the same, influenced by a feeling for which I am unable to account—and which seems, to me, purely English—the family could not rest satisfied until the inspection of Burt Newton had taken place. They knew that the old woman was certain to be horribly rude; they were sorely afraid that Burt might take offense and bring about a rupture. Still, he must be inspected.

They were in too deep mourning for dinner-giving except to relatives and very intimate friends; but they lengthened their table as much as decorum would permit, inviting only men—the MacTaggart hated women—and carefully choosing those in whose presence there was the most hope of the dreadful spinster's electing to appear at her best.

The evening came, and, when it was almost time for Burt to go to the house, the nice elderly "padrona" of his lodgings slipped on the stairs near his door and hurt herself severely. It was Burt who picked her up, and he would not leave her in the charge of her frightened domestic until his own servant had brought a doctor. In consequence, he arrived very late at the Fanshawes'; and, as he followed the announcement of his name into the drawing-room, before he could address his hostess he heard a gruff voice with a pronounced Scotch accent say in no measured tones:

"So that's your Yankee, Miss Angela? Well, I never expected to reach a pass where I should be kept waiting for my dinner on account of one!"

Burt repressed the excuses he had been about to offer and looked as serene and smiling as if his tardiness were something really praiseworthy.

"I had a good reason, and I'm very sorry," he whispered to Mrs. Fanshawe; "but, if you tell that woman so, I'll go home."

He was duly presented to the Chieftainess, at whom he gazed in mingled wonder and amusement. She was five feet ten in height, brown as a gipsy, wrinkled like a hickory-nut, with a pair of small fiery black eyes, and she wore a yellow satin gown which might, to judge from its appearance, have been worn by three successive generations of Chieftainesses, while on her head she actually had a turban perched, and in it an eagle's-feather fastened by a common Cairngorm brooch.

"Humph!" said she, when their hostess named Mr. Newton, "you are so late, I thought you must be the ices."

"Something even cooler," responded Burt, with a profound bow and in his suavest tones.

There was a hasty marshaling of the guests into the dining-room, which covered alike the MacTaggart's anger and the irrepressible smiles of the company. Burt was on one side of the hostess, and Mr. Fanshawe of course took in the Chieftainess, so the length of the table spread between the belligerent Scotchwoman and the offending American, for which the Fanshawes were devoutly thankful.

But the Chieftainess's blood was up, and she thirsted for combat. Always ready to annoy her kinsfolk, she was more than usually inclined to do so now, with wrath against Burt added to her irritation that the detestable Angela should have succeeded in ensnaring a man so handsome and so rich.

She swallowed her soup in silence, then she contradicted her host twice within three seconds. She had just begun to abuse the wine when her temper received a fresh impetus from the sound of Burt's laugh and some merry answer he gave to a question old Lord Bolton asked in regard to the young gentleman's native land.

"Why, can that be so?" she called, in her hoarse croak. "You astonish me, Mr.—Mr.—oh, yes, Newton. Why, is America really civilized?"

"Less so than we could wish, madam," returned Burt, in his sweetest voice; "we have labored under a terrible misfortune."

"What's that? What's that?" she demanded.

"Being descended from the inhabitants of Great Britain," he rejoined; and, though probably most of the company were vexed, nobody could help laughing, the Chieftainess excepted.

The august amazon again took refuge within herself; and, when Mr. Fanshawe very unwisely attempted to call her forth from that appalling

seclusion, she forced him to repeat his remark several times, thereby attracting the attention of the whole table, and, when she had accomplished this, vouchsafed a reply more terse than elegant.

"That's stuff," said she; "and you know it is, Fanshawe."

The old fossil wanted to ruin the success of the dinner, and would have succeeded had it not been for Burt. He perceived her drift and exerted himself; Angela came to his assistance; old Lord Bolton brightened up, which gave Mrs. Fanshawe courage: so, among them, they contrived a good deal of merriment, causing the Chieftainess to wax more belligerent than ever when she discovered that for once her ill-humor was powerless to destroy the general comfort.

"That young man makes so much noise, I can't hear what you say," she observed, audibly, as the unfortunate Mr. Fanshawe again attempted to find a little conversation for her benefit. "Do all Americans talk as loud as you, Mr.—Mr. Newton?"

"Oh, yes," said Burt, who happened to be blessed with one of those low sweet voices like the undertones of an organ. "You see, we've had to make ourselves heard all the way across the ocean."

"Well, you've done it effectually," rejoined old Lord Bolton; and the laughter which ensued drove the Chieftainess nearly frantic.

When the ladies retired to the drawing-room, Angela escaped, determined not to appear until the gentlemen joined them; but, presently, one of her sisters hunted her up, begging her to go to mamma's aid; for the MacTaggart was surpassing herself in awfulness, and had actually reduced the poor mater to the verge of tears.

"Were you smoking a cigar with the men?" asked the Chieftainess, as Angela appeared to the rescue.

"Of course," said Angela, calmly. "Mamma dear, are you not well?"

"Not very," sighed the unhappy lady.

"It was that dish of curry," pronounced the amazon. "I never tasted anything so dreadful; I took one morsel and really thought I was poisoned."

"Altogether, cousin, I fear that we have not succeeded in pleasing you, this evening," said Angela, in a tone of delightful indifference.

"Oh, don't—don't, Angy!" whispered Mrs. Fanshawe.

But Angela was not to be checked; the date of her marriage was too close for her to have any fear of her father—the only reason which had for a long time induced her to endure their

kinswoman's insults—and now she determined boldly to resent them.

"If you mean yourself, miss, let me tell you that you never did succeed in pleasing me," retorted the MacTaggart, sniffing like a war-horse at the prospect of a combat with a more efficient opponent than poor Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Then it is fortunate that, hereafter, we are not likely to meet often," said Angela, with a good-natured laugh, aware that to keep her temper was the most effectual way of infuriating her enemy.

"I suppose you are going over to America to live in a wigwam," sneered MacTaggart.

"Later, we may," replied Angela; "but we mean to try London first, and Lady Howard is to present me at court."

"Well, well—you were very lucky to catch that poor boy," said the Chieftainess. "He's a terrible savage; but that's of no consequence."

"Not the slightest," rejoined Angela; "and I have too many Scotch relations for the fact to frighten me."

"I said you were lucky," snapped the MacTaggart. "Was it hard work?"

"Oh, no; he succumbed very easily and with a good grace," Angela answered, laughing merrily again. "I suppose he reflected that, in this age of railways and telegraphs, he could not escape. Australia—not even India is any protection nowadays."

Mrs. Fanshawe shivered in helpless fright and horror, while the MacTaggart shook with a rage

so fierce that her teeth chattered till she could not speak. Neither she nor the mother had any idea that Angela was acquainted with the severest mortification of the Chieftainess's life.

When a young woman, the families had projected a union between her and a distant relative, who, a few weeks previous to the time set for the marriage, absolutely ran away to escape her. She followed down to Rome, whither he was supposed to have gone; but he had hidden himself, as it turned out, in the depths of India. Years elapsed before his kindred discovered his whereabouts, and, as he had already espoused a Begum, there was no chance for the MacTaggart.

As Angela leaned back in her chair, after flinging her awful sarcasm in the face of her foe, to Mrs. Fanshawe's intense relief the gentlemen appeared, though their presence was not required so far as peace was concerned—for once, the MacTaggart was struck dumb. She sat, for a little, glaring and shaking in impotent wrath, then the neuralgic pain from which she had been suffering all day increased to a pitch so agonizing that she was forced to gather herself up and depart.

Two days later, she started for Naples, refusing to see any of the Fanshawes before she left. Angela and her father quarreled over the matter; but, in his heart, the pompous gentleman could not help rejoicing that the audacious young lady had in a measure avenged the general and long-continued family wrongs.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

THE DOCTOR'S PATIENTS.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

THE handsome estate of Rose Hill, one of the finest in Connecticut, long without a tenant, was sold at last. A gentleman, with an invalid wife and a pretty daughter, purchased and took possession of it. They seemed very pleasant people, but slow in making acquaintances.

Young Doctor Everson always admired the place, when he passed it in his rides; but of course he would not venture to call without an invitation. However, one day, accident gave him the desired opportunity. As he was riding by, the front door opened, and Miss Bennett came tripping down the steps.

"Please stop a moment!" she called out. "Are you not a doctor?" she said, and a rose-tint of embarrassment deepened in her cheek.

"I am. Can I be of service?" he said, with his most professional air.

"Yes, indeed!" was the quick answer. "My mother is very ill, and papa not here. As we are strangers, I did not know whom to go to, so I ventured to stop you."

"Perfectly right," said the doctor. "I am at your disposal immediately." He sprang from his buggy, tied his horse to the hitching-post, and followed the young lady to a pleasant room, where a lady covered with a handsome afghan lay on a sofa.

"Mamma," said the girl, bending tenderly over her, "the doctor is here."

"Oh, well, he can't do me any good," was the fretful answer.

Doctor Everson stepped up and laid his hand upon the invalid's wrist, saying cheerfully: "Suppose we try, anyway."

"It's no use!" moaned the lady. "Just one horrid dose after another, and they all make me worse."

Dr. Everson's reply was to ask kindly: "What have you been taking?"

Mrs. Bennett gave a list. The doctor laughed.

"As you are alive after all that," he said, "there's hope yet! Now, can you tell me your bad feelings?"

The lady went over all her symptoms, and the doctor said, in that cheery tone which always brings new life into a sick-room: "That is better than I hoped. You can almost cure yourself, madam, if you will follow a few of the simplest directions."

"What are they?" asked the daughter, eagerly.

"Only to dispense with all medicine, unless some light thing for her nerves; eat plenty of nourishing food; throw these windows all open to the air and sunshine; and take a great deal of exercise. Walk, or ride, often."

"Walk? Oh, I can't walk! I haven't taken a step since we came here!" said Mrs. Bennett.

The doctor rose and went to her side.

"Take my arm, please, and cross the room with me," he said.

The very suddenness and novelty of the act surprised the invalid into obedience; and, almost before she knew it, she had risen, crossed the room, and was restored to her place.

"You see you can walk, if you make the effort," said the doctor, with his firm cheery tone.

"That is what we have been trying to make her think this good while," said the daughter, her pleasure at the success of the doctor's experiment showing in her sweet face.

"It is her greatest need," said the doctor. "I will leave something to quiet this pain and restlessness, and I think that is all she requires to-day."

"I hope so. I feel better, I'm sure," sighed the patient.

Doctor Everson left some simple powders, and, at the daughter's request, promised to call again the next day.

"Papa will be here, and I wish you to see him. Here are our cards," said Miss Bennett, as she showed the doctor downstairs.

The doctor bowed and gave her in return his own card, upon which, after he was gone, she read the name "Frank Everson, M.D."

The next day, the doctor called a second time, and found Mrs. Bennett much better. Mr. Bennett was at home, and greatly pleased with the doctor's treatment.

To effect the cure, of course the doctor called frequently. And if, in so doing, he became more interested in the nurse than the patient, nobody was the wiser.

Sometimes, to relieve the tedious hours of duty, he took the fair nurse out to drive, and in these pleasant hours they grew very well acquainted.

Mrs. Bennett had been for two months under the doctor's care, and was so greatly improved that Nellie sometimes left her, to take a ramble by herself in the pleasant fields and woods near Rose Hill. One afternoon, having strayed down a road which was new to her, she came to an old mill, the ruins of which were grass-grown and rotten. But Nellie supposed they would bear her light weight, and, from mere impulse, walked out on the old timbers which overhung the stream, and stood flinging pebbles into the water, to watch the ripples they made.

She did not notice the wavering of the timbers until, just as she turned to go back, crash! went the log on which she stood, and down went Nellie into the stream. As she went down, she gave a frantic clutch and succeeded in grasping a cross-timber, which held her suspended, with her shoulders just out of the water.

Nellie knew that the stream was deep, and she could not swim. She shrieked and shrieked for help, but none came. Her limbs were becoming chilled; she felt her strength ebbing. She clung more desperately to the old beam than ever; but her hold was loosening, and she had almost let go, when the sound of wheels behind her gave her courage for one more effort and one more cry of "Help! Help!"

An instant, and the cheerful shout rang answering back: "Hold hard! I'm coming!"

Poor Nellie knew the voice, and strove to turn her head. She saw Doctor Everson

leap from his buggy and fling off his coat as he ran for the creek. A moment more, and he had dashed into the stream, and his strong arms held her firmly.

"Let go of the beam, but don't cling to me," he said, rapidly. "Just keep entirely still, and I can easily get you out."

Nellie, with a great feeling of security, lay passive on his broad breast, until a few bold strokes carried them to the shore.

"Oh, I should have died if you had not come!" she sobbed, shivering with cold and fright, as he laid her on the grass.

"I should have come sooner if I had known you needed me," said he. "But don't talk now; you'll chill to death."

As he spoke, he hurriedly picked up his coat, fastened it over her shoulders, put her, all dripping and shivering, into his vehicle, and drove like the wind.

As they started, she said: "Doctor, I can't thank you. But you seem to be near whenever I want help."

He turned to her with a great light in his face, and for one instant his arm clasped her as he said fervently: "My darling, I would ask nothing better of life than to be near you always!"

Then he took his arm away, but gently, and not a word more was said during the short drive. But, as he carried her into the house, he whispered:

"I have said too much not to say more. May I say it when you are yourself again?"

"Yes," whispered Nellie. And then she felt a light kiss on her cheek.

And, when the doctor told her the "more" which was to follow his "much," Nellie found the answer so readily in her own heart that she gave it without any coquettish hesitation.

Mr. Bennett had been so well pleased with the doctor's success with his first patient, that, when he asked for the second one as his reward, his request was granted. And, before long, Nellie Bennett was the doctor's bride.



THE GAME OF CHESS.

BY FREDERIC B. PERKINS.

THE belief in supernatural influences has prevailed in all ages and countries. Even in this enlightened nineteenth century, and in spite of science, the superstition lurks secretly in the public mind. People, indeed, no longer nail horse-shoes over the door to keep off witches, but they crowd to awe-struck circles to hear mediums converse with spirits. There are tens of thousands of persons, and in the most intellectual portions of the country too, who firmly believe that departed friends can be summoned back to earth, and the secrets of the grave extorted from the "rapping" spirits of the dead.

This is not the place to discuss how far these things are the result of a morbid condition of the nervous system, or whether indeed, as the greatest of dramatists and poets has said, "there are more things in heaven and earth, than are dreamt of" even by philosophy. Mesmerism, clairvoyance, biology, certainly throw new light on the constitution, or diseases of the mind. Our purpose is to narrate a series of events, which happened in an illustrious Italian house, bearing upon this curious and engrossing subject. These strange facts some persons may explain psychologically, while others will insist on their supernatural origin. For ourselves, we shall give no opinion, but leave the reader to draw his own conclusions, whether the main actor was insane, was under a delusion, or really had to do with supernatural powers.

High up in the Apennines stands a grim castle, the last princely owner of which, immuring himself from the world, spent his days in playing chess alone in his hall. Rumor went that no visible antagonist played against him, and that even his favorite page, Alessandro, whenever the chess-board was brought out, fled from the apartment. Stony, perpendicular, cold and impregnable, upon the brow of an angry rock, stood the castle. As stony, perpendicular, cold and impregnable, it was said, sat the count within, overhanging the wide table in his hall, with beetling brows and cruel eyes, like the black castle, whose gloomy battlements and red-mouthed culverins frowned over the campagna below.

The count, who had long borne the reputation of being one of the best players in Italy, like all

persons who pride themselves on their skill at this game, never touched a piece till he had determined where to put it. There he sat, gazing steadily upon the chess-men, except when, ever and anon, he moved a piece, when he would look up, for a moment, to where his adversary ought to have been, as if to read the effect in his face. No word ever passed his lips, yet at intervals he would frown, and at intervals smile grimly, as though listening, or replying to his adversary. A spectator would have doubted whether he imagined an opponent, and himself performed both parts of the conversation, as he did of the game; or whether some shadowy being of the Powers of the Air did actually sit opposite to him, invisible to everybody but the count, and exchange words, in the pauses of the game, unheard by all except the unhappy nobleman.

We have said that the page, Alessandro, between whom and the count some invisible tie seemed to exist, invariably fled from the hall, in terror, whenever the chess-board was brought out. His master often frowned at this, and, at last, ordered the lad, one day, to be bound to a chair. The youth trembled and turned pale, but neither wept nor entreated. His face, however, soon assumed a strange, tranced expression, while his muscles relaxed so that he seemed to lose all control over them. As the game progressed, he became agitated by evident emotion. He stared frightfully across the board to the further side of the table. He often seemed about to speak, but the words always died on his tongue in the very moment of utterance. His limbs quivered; he breathed convulsively; and at last, just as the count placed a knight in a commanding position, intending the piece to remain there during the development of a powerful combination of moves which he had conceived—just as the count had done this, we say, and looked up with a sneering and sinister smile, as if to defy his adversary, just then Alessandro respired a long sigh, and as if becoming suddenly aware of the presence of some overpoweringly evil and gigantic existence, crouched down shuddering, terror taking away his senses and his strength. The sigh aroused the count, who, alarmed for the consequences, hastily summoned a servant and gave the youth into his

charge; after which, without other apparent discomposure, he sat down quietly again to his game.

This had commenced after a fashion frequent with the count; a method to which a general similarity is found in the opening known at present as the "easy game." The count had moved first; and having preserved his attack by judicious play, had at the point where Alessandro's sudden fainting fit (if such it were) occurred, conducted his game well nigh to a successful termination. His adversary's king was much crowded in the corner to which he had retired by castling on his own side. The count's two castles bore heavily across the board; for, by a manœuvre not uncommon in a high style of play, he had contrived, after two or three unexpected moves, to castle his own king suddenly upon the queen's side, and thus to open a quick and violent assault upon the citadel of his foe. The knight of which mention was made, was planted by the count at his king's bishop's sixth square, while his adversary's pawn just opposite had not moved at all, although the two neighboring ones had. The count's pawns, on the same side, being also well forward, victory seemed certain. It was after long pauses, and with a still and restrained expression of deep-felt triumph, that the count moved his adversary's men, as if at the direction of some one indicating the pieces and squares. His own answering moves were made promptly and decidedly; and in truth, after no very protracted course of play, the count sat erect in his chair, and gazed across the wide table with the angry pleasure which comes from victory over one who has before been conquering himself. "Mate in three," said he, quietly, and he drew a long sigh of relief and delight. The mate was given; and the count arose and walked about the dreary hall with quick and heavy steps. With head bent upon his breast, and hands crossed behind him, he walked and mused. Then suddenly he stopped, stepped to a window, took a small volume from a cabinet, and entered upon one of its pages a single mark. The page was nearly covered with similar marks, disposed upon the two sides of a line dividing it in the middle. Having accomplished this, he sat down within the deep recess of the window, and remained long in profound meditation.

His thoughts must have been disagreeable; for more than once he looked up and out into the gloom of the large room with an expression betokening deep and quick anger, or a mixture of that passion with fear. But the fear and the anger soon faded out, and his noble and hand-

some features settled back into their usual lines, revealing impassible determination and glowing energy, but yet shadowed by some intangible gloom; as if his daily thoughts were relieved upon a deep back-ground of dusky sorrow, and the Past was a spectre that forever haunted him.

The count meditated long, and at last, with a quick and resolved air, summoned a servant and commanded him to bring Alessandro. The youth shortly appeared, assisted by the messenger, for he was too weak to walk alone. In consideration of this, the count bade him to sit, and after the departure of the serving-man, expressed regret that what he called "a hasty experiment," should have ended so unluckily.

"I intended no harm," he said, "and really wrought you none, as you will find. But tell me," he added, fixing his eyes on the lad, "what was the cause of so violent an indisposition?"

The youth trembled and grew faint. But the count reassured him, even putting on, whether by constraint and pretence, or from real affection, a demeanor of sympathy and soothing kindness. He then poured out, with his own hands, a cup of wine for the lad.

"I cannot clearly explain," said the page, at last; "but I felt sure," said he, hesitatingly, "that there was some one else in the room, and some one who meant evil to us both. This frightened me, because I could see no one. And then a singular feeling came over me; and just as you moved the knight, which was——"

He paused, and seemed trying to remember. The count assisted him.

"Just before you fainted."

"Fainted?" asked Alessandro. "I did not faint. Oh, yes; I remember now. It was dreadful to see so far, and so much."

He spoke slowly and dreamily, and seemed relapsing into the same condition of apparent torpor, to which he alluded. But the count, looking at him steadily, cried,

"Sit up, sir, and don't be a fool. Tell me, precisely, what were your feelings."

The energy of the count seemed to pass into Alessandro, as that of the magnetizer does into his subject. The page raised his head, looked steadily at the count, and answered firmly,

"I saw that you had played many games, and were to play more. I saw that in somewhat more than half of them you had won. There came also a feeling of apprehension lest of the remaining games you should lose too many; and it began to appear that something dreadful would happen if you should. Then I tried to see with whom you were playing; but it appalled me to look, even though I felt I could not

see. Just at that point some one caught hold of me; the dream faded, and I found that they were taking me out of the hall. There is one thing more, I understood the game better than before, and I saw that at the third move before the decisive move of the knight, the game might have been decided the other way; and I felt as if it was by purpose, and not by error, that you were allowed to win."

The count's face changed but little during this recital. But it evidently required all his self-control not to show any external signs of the agitation he felt. A keener observer than the weak and wearied Alessandro would have noticed the dimness that once or twice came into his eyes, the contraction of his eye-brows, the compression of his lips, the grip of his hand upon the arm of his chair, and the unnaturally long respirations, like struggling billows of excitement chained down by a giant effort.

"Those are singular dreams," said the count, at last. "You may retire, however, for the present."

Alessandro left the room. No sooner had the door closed behind him, than his master started upright and again strode up and down the hall. Again, as before, was he shaken and tried, but by mightier gusts and whirlwinds of some hidden passion. After an hour, however, he grew more calm, when he sent again for Alessandro.

"Alessandro," he said, "I think you told me that you saw how I might have been beaten?"

"Yes, my lord," said the youth.

"Come to the board, then, and show me how."

The page hesitated, "I fear I cannot do it, now," said he, "the knowledge came to me without my seeking it; it was as if it were shown to me in a picture, and it was taken away when I woke up."

"But sit down," commanded his imperious master. "You must and shall show me the variation." And he looked at him from his deep, glowing eyes with an intensity of gaze which few men could have withstood, and which discomposed the slender and feeble Alessandro too much to permit him to object. The count hastily rearranged the chess-men, and replayed the last game, up to the point of inquiry.

"Now, Alessandro," said he, sternly, and promptly, "tell me that other move which would have mated me without remedy." And again he gazed steadily upon the youth.

Alessandro turned pale, and muttered something inaudibly, looking, however, into the count's deep eyes without flinching.

"But you must and shall," said the nobleman, in a tone of quiet resolve, "if you never come

out of your fainting fit. There was nobody here before, but you and me, in spite of your dreams. And if you saw anything then, I made you see it, and I can do the same again. At least"—and here the count seemed rather to reflect than to converse—"at least you must have got all those other notions out of my mind, for they are there, and have been there, these twenty years—a goodly and lovely company to haunt a bearded man, forsooth!"

Then he addressed the youth again,

"I must, and will have it. And if you can tell me that, you must help me play the remaining games. For if you can teach me the flaw in the strongest attack I have ever made, you will be a valuable assistant in the remainder of the match."

Alessandro turned paler yet, and sat still a moment. Then, with a struggling utterance, and as if against strong resistance, he spoke.

"Second player," said he, "king to rook's square."

The count examined the move. There seemed at first nothing remarkable about it. But after careful analysis, he satisfied himself that it might be so followed up as utterly to frustrate the attack which he had thought irresistible; and to reverse the actual result of the game.

"It certainly is so," said he, at last. "It certainly does appear that my page is a better chess-player than I, who play on even terms with the great Italian masters. This will ensure me the match—though I felt sure enough before. Let me see."

He arose and took his memorandum book, and counted the two sets of marks. "What an enormous contest!" said he, still talking to himself. "A thousand games! Well. It will be worth the winning." Then he computed carefully. "Three hundred and seventy-eight against two hundred and ninety. One hundred and twenty-three to win. I shall do it. At least I and Alessandro will."

Next day the count and his page sat down to play chess, in consultation, against the invisible foe, if such there were. The page, with less agitation than he had before shown, seemed to fall into a half dreaming state, and sat still. The count, however, consulted him with implicit reliance during great part of the game. But the words of the youth seemed to be uttered with increasing reluctance. Gradually a painful expression of perplexity settled in his face. At last the nobleman found himself hopelessly beaten by virtue of a move recommended by his young auxiliary. His rage was immediate and intense. He shook the youth violently,

calling him a false deceiver, and bidding him wake up; but neither threats nor violence hastened Alessandro's revival. Slowly and feebly the lad recovered, and looked languidly upon the count.

"By the golden nails in the holy house of Loretto!" cried the latter. "By the beloved heart of our lady! if it were not for your youth you should feed eagles upon the mountains there! Now, in the fiend's name, what is the cause of this deception? If you make not out your case, woe be to you!"

But Alessandro answered quietly and slowly, as if his faculties were still partially benumbed,

"I did only as I could. You forced me to see, and then mixed error in my mind, so that I could not. You know that you hid the truth from me. For the woman and the priest signified it while I was asleep; but you drove them away, and said there were no such persons. And that was not true. The falsehood of those words darkened my mind, and I could see nothing at all."

At these words, strange to say, the count's anger faded out. He sat in silence for a time; then suddenly aroused himself and curtly dismissed Alessandro; after which he relapsed into painful meditations, nor was it till the next day that he required again the attendance of the page. Then having summoned the lad, he addressed him in a sullen and distempered manner; as one who is obliged, though bitterly enraged and distressed at the necessity, to communicate information disgraceful or dangerous to the giver.

"Alessandro," said he, "I shall tell you the whole truth, though I never thought to do it. But your aid in this match I *must* have; for you will——". He broke off: then resumed. "Understand, then, that you are my son—my only child. I married your mother in my youth. Her brother was a priest; and he united us. She was very beautiful. And she loved me well. But I had hoped that I could change her quiet nature, and induce her to share in my own rude pleasures. I soon found, however, that the occupations which I loved pained her, and that in preference to pursuing them she would sit and read in old books. Chess was the only one of my pursuits in which she took any interest; and in playing it, when we were together—which was not often—we passed much time, so that, at last, she became a better player than myself. I was wroth at this, and made desperate efforts to overcome her; but it was in vain. Her deep meditative mind was always too much for my angry and ill-regulated one; while she, not seeing, or not understanding my wrath, laughed and triumphed in innocent joy. And I——" the

count stopped, struggled fiercely to choke down some passion within, mastered himself and proceeded—"I grew to hate her—I left her alone; I plunged in war and tumults, until sickness came upon the fair flower I had walled up here; and she gave birth to you and died. Then, in an agony of remorse, I shut myself up. While in this condition, wild with grief, her brother, a foolish priest, came to reproach me—to reproach me, and with bitter words to charge me with baseness and murder—and all this while I was gnawing my heart with sorrow! In a sudden phrenzy I sprang at his throat." He stopped again, as if almost choked with emotion: then added. "He died, and ever since the priest and the lady are with me."

Great drops of sweat broke out on his forehead, and he paused once more. But soon he resumed more calmly,

"It is an old saying in my family, preserved from the time of the coming over of the Greeks of the Lower Empire, that my house is to become extinct in a baron, its head, who shall slay his wife and his heir. But my wife I did not slay," he added, with a wild laugh, "and you are only my page. For I have disinherited you since you were my only child, that there might be no risk of my fulfilling the old prophecy by killing you; and I have made Roberto, the seneschal, my heir, under a limitation to transfer the estate to you at his own death, and to render over to you what sums and matters you shall require between my death and his. So you are my son, but not my heir. Yet none of my household know of these things, except the old man; for those who served me in those days I dismissed, and procured other retainers. And as for the games of chess which I daily play, and which you must now help me play, I play them for a great wager. I play them for my life, with a strong and wicked spirit who gained a right over me by the neglect by which I killed my wife—of which my wife died—I don't mean that, of course—after which—I should say—my wife died; and by my murder of the priest, her reproving brother. The spirit came to me in my deepest sorrow, while I brooded over those two misfortunes, and threatened me and exulted over me; and proved to me that I was due to him. But he said that I might free myself, if I played a thousand games of chess with him, and won; and I must beat him in five hundred and one, or he retains his right. But if I do so beat him he gives it up, and I am pure and free from my sin. So you must help me, because you *can* help me."

The count ceased; and his deep eyes shone with a glare like that of insanity. Directly,

enjoining his son not to reveal what he had said, he abruptly dismissed him for that day.

It is not necessary to trace in detail the successive games which the count and his son played. For some time the success of the joint players might seem to justify the wisdom of the count's confidence. The truthfulness of the relation between them, as now explained, seemed at first to have restored the youth's marvelous insight. Yet this expectation soon began to fade. It was easy to see, after some time had elapsed, that not only did the youth grow more and more weak, pale and sickly in appearance, but that likewise he grew less and less skillful at the game. When the count irritably commented on this, the lad, in the apathetic manner which had now become ordinary to him, replied, that at first he became able to see in consequence of the commands of the count; and that then he could see; but that afterward the commands of the count not only opened his eyes to the conduct of the game, but to results beyond, and thoughts unutterable; in other words, that the influence of the count now not only furnished power to see, but also the things to be seen.

Thus the partnership of the youth had latterly operated to the disadvantage of the count, since, without assisting him, it had tended, through his confidence in the youth's decisions, to fortify his trust in his own perspicacity, and continually to make his moves hasty and ill-digested. In this way, at the end of a few weeks, the young man's aid, instead of materially assisting his father in his play, had thrown him materially back, so that now, instead of being nearly one hundred games in advance of his opponent, the count had but a meagre excess of some thirty or forty.

Daily, now, the count played, but alone again. For the health of his son had faded away, as some delicate flower fades under the unwholesome shadow of a poison tree; and the count, beginning to fear for the youth's life, had ordered him no more to be present when the chess-board was brought out. Yet it was not without misgivings that the count surrendered the presence of his son. He played now, in daily doubt and dread, nay, in daily increasing agitation, and often and more often, he lost. His own rugged strength, under the approaching crisis, began to fail. He grew meagre and gloomy, hunted no more, never even went out, but sat all day brooding over the bitter memories in his soul. The inextricable tangle, as it seemed to him, of his present embarrassments; the dreadful future ensured to him in the event of the loss of the match; the wasting life of his only child, whom,

now that he had spoken to him as to a son, he began to regard with a fathomless depth of affection; the impending extinction of his family, if his son should die—all these hovered about him, as he paced up and down the hall, or sat silently in the shadowed window-seat. In consequence his power as a player began to fail. Sometimes, in spite of resolutions to the contrary, deliberately formed before he sat down, his moves would be dictated by sudden anger. Instead of calculating coolly and long how to counteract a threatened attack, he would, on such occasions, hastily adopt some unstudied and inefficient plan of defence, and would then move a piece rapidly and violently, as if the mere momentum would physically tell upon the array of the adversary, like the stroke of a broadsword.

An occasional return of his old power of self-mastery, however, gave him a few games from time to time. But on the whole, he lost steadily, until at last he had won just five hundred games. Four hundred and ninety-nine were scored against him. The final game only remained to be played, the eventful game which was to determine the result of the long contest.

It was a wild and stormy afternoon, in mid-winter. A fierce tempest of wind, varied with occasional angry dashes of sleet, came shrieking drearily over the higher ranges of the Apennines, blackening all the rugged landscape, and especially the dark, old walls of the castle. Within the hall one could scarcely see. The feudal architects did not provide for light, as much as for safety; and even in the sunniest of summer days, this apartment was but a dreary room—a reservoir almost subterranean, whose cold and stagnant air was hardly stirred at all, was scarcely warmed by the slender pencils of light which the narrow and deep-set windows admitted. Now, it was doubly and trebly dreary. Doubly, by reason of the atmospheric gloom without, and the unsteady light of the torches which flickered and streamed about in the draught. Trebly, by the supernatural radiation of sorrow from the awful presence of the haggard count. For who would not feel an appalling sympathy with the tall man, pacing the chill and ghostly room, with lowered head and nervous step, in silent misery, and doubtful and gathering terror, feeling that the spirits of dead men hovered near; that more fearful beings were hastening to claim him; that his own reckless and hard-hearted folly had thus flung him headlong upon billows of sorrow, surging higher and higher; that now, in weakness of body, from illness or watching, and worse, in weakness of soul, from the wearing discouragement of many defeats, and even from

the very consciousness of the magnitude of the issue, he must go down into a conflict whose result was veiled in angry clouds, upon whose mysterious shade even, not to mention the things hidden within, his conscience admonished him not to dare to look.

Long, in doubt, and in fear, he walked, and at last, with a sullen and boding desperation, he sat down at the chess-table. He sprang up again in hideous fear, at seeing that his adversary's pawn, the king's pawn, was already moved two squares out. Perhaps he had moved it himself, while passing up and down, past the table; but if he had, he had entirely forgotten it, and it seemed to him a tangible and exultingly defiant initiative, assumed by his invisible opponent, by way of triumphing in advance. The count put forth his hand to replace the pawn, intending at first to resume his promenade, and to see whether it would again be moved out; but he dared not, lest it should be. He resented himself, therefore, and moved in reply.

The game approached a crisis. The count had played well and carefully, restricting himself, by unremitting efforts, to a line of operations slow enough for safety. Again and again he put forth his hand, and withdrew it just as his fingers were closing on the piece, as he suddenly saw some consequence overlooked before. As the attack which the count, true to his bold nature, had urged powerfully upon his opponent, converged within closer and closer limits, the burden of the occasion weighed heavier and heavier upon him. Upon combinations requiring for their success the coolest and clearest calculation, he could now bestow only the unsteady and fitful attention of a mind weakened by internal conflicts, harassed by fearful bodings, and dispirited by long defeat. Even the very importance of the time oppressed him, and weighed him down. As every answering move, therefore, of his opponent was indicated to him, he studied its consequences with secret fear at his heart; and only by desperate internal exertions was he able to preserve the aggressive feeling proper to an assailant. Such being the case, it was with keen and bounding delight that the count at last saw that a series of moves had become possible, which would either mate his adversary or deprive him of his queen, the most valuable of his pieces. This would decide the game, the match, and the future. Trembling with irrepressible excitement, the count examined the position. He had an alternative line of play, safe but unenterprising, which would certainly protract the game to a considerable length, and which would not immediately decide its termination. But the

present plan was speedy and sure. Again and again he developed the variations springing from the key move—the move which it was now his turn to make. There could be no error. Either mate, or queen lost, was the necessary result, for the adversary. Something of the old, free, triumphant feeling came back to the count, illuminated his flushed and agitated features, blazed again in his large, hollow eyes. He sat upright for a moment, and closed his eyes, to abstract himself for a last, thorough re-examination of the combinations. The storm, which he had not heard since sitting down, had momentarily fallen into silence. Afar off, it raved and drove hither and thither among the hills, and its distant anger sounded faintly upon the ears of the lord of the castle, sitting there alone. But dead and heavy stillness was close around his walls, although, as he bent over the table for the last inspection preparatory to his decisive move, a long, low, wailing blast seemed to creep past the foot of the fortress, like a forerunner of the returning tempest. With certainty accumulating every moment, the count followed out all the trains of play; and the low, moaning breath of the blast without rose higher and wilder around the black old walls. Higher, wilder, until in one long, unending shriek, the wind swept past the solid building and away into the vast fields of air, with a persistent and fearfully sustained scream, which even drew the count's attention, for a moment, away from his game, as the torches flared and flickered suddenly in their small orbs of thick, yellow light, and the castle almost vibrated in the wind. Fierce sheets of rain drove through the thickened air, hissing and spattering against the building. The count moved, and with a long sigh, such as one draws when resting in certainty after long doubt, he sat upright again, and with an expression upon his face which would have been a smile, had not so much wrath and fear mingled in it, he looked determinedly again to the further side of the table. As he did so his countenance changed, and he trembled in his chair. For then, singularly coincident in time with the unsaid triumph which elated the count, came a quick and vivid lightning stroke, and close thereafter a heart-appalling thunder-clap; a fearful one, which burst forth in one unendurable, immeasurable pang of sound, and then rolled and re-echoed far away among distant mountains and over the level country southward. The count looked again at the chess-board. As he did so the expressions of exultation, of impatience, of wrath, quickly fled from his face. Only frightful fear remained. An answering move, which, by

some inconceivable oversight, had escaped him, absolutely ensured his destruction. A door opened. The old seneschal hurried in and stood with fearful eyes before his lord. "Sir count," said he, "your son is dead."

The count looked steadily at the speaker, as if running over the words in his mind and estimating their meaning. Then his lips moved; but it was only after several ineffectual efforts that he succeeded in saying, "You may go."

The seneschal left the hall. The count lifted his hand toward the board; it fell heavily among the golden chess-men. His head sank down upon it. He was dead.

For he *had* slain his wife and his son. And the game, and the match, and the life of the count, were all ended as the storm without died sullenly away, and the torches burned quietly and alone within their thick, smoky, yellow orbs of light in the solitary hall.

THE HAUNTED STREAM.

BY JAMES H. DANA.

In one of the interior counties of Pennsylvania, there lies, embosomed in wooded uplands, a sinuous and lovely river, which, from time immemorial, has been known as the Haunted Stream. The Indians accounted for this name, by a tradition that, ages before, a maiden of their race, who had been crossed in love, had cast herself into its waters, and that, ever since, her spirit might occasionally be seen, haunting its sylvan shores.

Such, at least, was the legend that a bold and handsome young borderer heard, one bright morning about a century ago, as he stood on the banks of this picturesque river with an Indian companion. The old French war had then just broken out, and as the frontier settlements were disturbed with rumors that the hitherto friendly savages were about to assume arms, Lieutenant Rochester, for our hero bore a commission in the provincial army, had been despatched on a scouting expedition, in company with a friendly Delaware.

"Its a pretty story, War-Eagle, whether it be true or not," said the borderer. "I never saw a lovelier landscape. But hist, what is that?"

As he spoke, the faint dip of a paddle was heard, and hardly had the two companions concealed themselves, when a light canoe shot into sight around a bend of the river. In a few minutes this fairy craft was near enough for Rochester to discern that it was tenanted by a young and beautiful female, richly attired in a picturesque Indian costume. When the canoe was nearly opposite where the young man lay concealed, a dexterous stroke of the paddle turned its prow shoreward, and immediately after, with a light and graceful step, its fair occupant leaped ashore.

Rochester was, for a moment, struck dumb with amazement and admiration. He had never, in his whole life, seen anything so beautiful as the vision that now dawned upon him; and, for awhile, he almost believed that he saw, not a living creature, but the airy spirit that haunted the spot. This idea was sustained by the extreme fairness of her complexion, which scarcely betokened Indian blood. But the illusion, for such it was, soon faded. Scarcely had the mysterious visitant advanced half a dozen steps, when she started and slightly screamed; and Rochester, following the direction of her eyes,

saw that his companion had emerged from his covert, and was creeping stealthily toward her with evidently hostile intentions.

At hearing her shriek, the savage leaped to his feet, and drawing his tomahawk, rushed upon her. Rochester dashed forward, but would have been too late, if the Indian beauty had not fled from her assailant, and, by a fortunate chance, taken the direction toward our hero. Thus the savage dared not hurl his weapon lest he should injure his friend. The fugitive, in her terror, did not see Rochester at first, but when she did, the instinct of safety caused her to rush unreflecting into his arms, where she lay like a frightened dove, helpless and panting.

"Put up your hatchet, Delaware," cried Rochester. "This is my prisoner, and I make no war on woman: much less," he added, internally, as he gazed on the lovely face silently pleading for protection, "much less on anything so lovely."

"My brother speaks well," replied the savage chief, reluctantly. "But the squaw is an enemy, and her people are, perhaps, even now on our trail."

"What you say is true enough, no doubt," answered Rochester, "but I would rather run a dozen risks of being scalped than do harm to such a pretty, timid bird as this. By my faith, War-Eagle, she is lovelier than any girl of the settlements. I didn't think your race could show anything so handsome. Who can she be?"

"The War Eagle has heard of her, for she is the child of his ancient foe. She is called the White Fawn, and is a chieftain's daughter. But the wigwams of her tribe are far from this, and her presence here betokens no good, for, where she goes, a hundred warriors follow. There will be, or has been, bloody work further down the Susquehannah. The White Fawn is in the rear, not in the front of the war-path."

"You reason rightly, Delaware," said the frank borderer, "but nevertheless we Christians hold it an article of faith not to harm a woman. So, come life or death, I shall free this pretty bird. But first speak to her, if you think she can understand your lingo. Tell her she can go where she lists, and that all Jack Rochester asks is that she shall promise not to betray us to her people."

During this colloquy the large, dark eyes of the Indian girl, lustrous as those of an antelope, had been turned from Rochester to War-Eagle,

and from the latter back to the former. Once or twice, when the chief was speaking, she clung closer to our hero, as if she comprehended that the Indian was her foe, and the borderer her friend. When Rochester finally announced his intention to set her free, her eyes beamed with indescribable thankfulness, and anticipating War-Eagle's speech, she pledged herself, in broken English, to conceal the vicinity of the scouts from her people, and, at the same time, expressed, in what Rochester thought the most liquid tones he had ever heard, her gratitude to him as her preserver.

"White man will go away—will forget the Indian girl—but she will never—never forget him," she said, with tears in her eyes, and, as she spoke, she seized his hand, by a sudden impulse, and kissed it. Then blushing at herself, she continued with dignity, moving toward her canoe. "The young Yenghese brave has saved the White Fawn's life, and night and morning she will pray to the Great Spirit for him."

With these words she turned away, and with a quick, light step gained her canoe, which, in another moment, shot into the centre of the stream, propelled by her skilful hand. Rochester watched her, with a sigh, till he heard the click of a rifle beside him. Turning quickly he beheld War-Eagle about to raise the deadly weapon and take aim at the fugitive. It was but the work of a moment to strike down the barrel; but the savage, who mistrusted the Indian girl, expostulated; and when the half angry discussion was over, and Rochester looked again at the canoe, the fair fugitive was disappearing behind the bend of the river. She passed from sight, and then the landscape seemed to lose half its charm.

"The War-Eagle yields his opinion to that of his brother, because he loves the young man as a son," said the chief. "But, since the squaw was allowed to escape, not a moment is to be lost. Before the sun is an hour older a hundred warriors will be on our trail. Let us go."

"There you speak wisely," said Rochester. "Not that I believe, Delaware, yonder girl will betray us, but, since she is here, it is clear that plenty of red skins are nigh also, and, be sure, they'll scent us out like wolves do dead deer in winter. Come, bear no malice," and he frankly extended his hand. "You Indians kill women as well as men, but we Christians don't: and, as you are serving the commonwealth now, and not the commonwealth you, why, chief, you must e'en fight in its fashion."

If not convinced by the borderer's logic, the Indian was mollified by his friendly manner; and accordingly he accepted the proffered hand. Immediately after, with a last look at that lovely landscape, Rochester followed his companion,

who had struck out, on a swinging trot, toward the settlements.

All that day the two scouts travelled, without resting, taking a south-easterly direction. When darkness set in, they halted, and arranged their camp for the night; but did not dare to strike a fire, fearing the propinquity of hostile Indians. A little jerked venison, which they carried for such emergencies, was their frugal supper; and then they lay down to sleep, intending, when the moon rose, to prosecute their journey again.

It seemed to Rochester as if he had just sunk into slumber, when he was suddenly aroused by finding his arms pinioned in a hostile grasp. He was awake in an instant, and would have sprung to his feet, if the person, or persons who held him, had not kept him down. He struggled desperately, for a moment, but in vain, and was finally forced to sink back, when his captors, for there were two, proceeded to tie his hands behind him with green withes.

He now, for the first time, looked around him. A little space off he saw War-Eagle, in the same plight as himself. But instead of the angry, flushed look of Rochester, the face of the Delaware wore an expression of imperturbable calm.

"They have stolen on us unheard, we slept so soundly," reflected Rochester. "Not very flattering to us, who thought ourselves such good backwoodsmen. I suppose the bloody devils intend to burn us at the stake, else they would have taken our scalps while asleep. The redskins, too, are of the same tribe as that lovely girl—cursed witch I should rather call her, for she betrayed us:—but no! I will never believe it—she is too innocent and true for that—its fate, I suppose, or pre-ordination as my old father, God bless him, used to say. At any rate, if the worst comes to the worst, these red devils shall find that a white man can die as bravely as one of themselves."

While these not very comfortable reflections were being made, the Indians, who appeared to be about twenty in number, had pinioned their two captives, and now, by words and signs, intimated to the prisoners that they were to retrace their steps. Accordingly, in a few moments, Rochester and War-Eagle were threading the mazes of the forest, in the centre of their captors, some going before in single file, and others following in the same manner.

Four days severe travelling brought the band to the vicinity of what Rochester supposed to be their native village, for a halt was ordered, and, after consultation, the savages proceeded to paint himself and companion partially black. This, he knew, was a sign that they were to die, and he began to prepare himself, mentally, for the approaching torture. This ceremony being

concluded, the march was resumed, and, in a few minutes, our hero's expectation that the village was near was realized, for suddenly, as if a troop of demons had been let loose, the air was filled with shouts, and instantaneously the woods, all around, appeared alive with women, boys and children, who having been apprized by runners of the return of the war-party, had come out to escort the prisoners in.

We will not tire our readers with a narrative of the scene that ensued. The prisoners endured the buffetings, and other indignities with which they were greeted, the one with savage stoicism, the other with Christian heroism. Instead of being led immediately to the stake, however, their sentence was deferred until the morrow. It seems that another war-party was expected, during the night, and the cruel sacrifice was delayed in order that the new-comers might participate in it. Meantime, after the women and children of the camp had tired of gazing at, and insulting Rochester and War-Eagle, the two captives, bound hand and foot, were left in a wigwam, in the centre of the village, to find solace, if they could, in slumber. As an additional precaution, however, several braves watched about the door.

Till nearly midnight Rochester lay in silence. The reprieve for the night would have been unwelcome, but that it afforded him time to prepare for death; for he was too sensible of his condition to indulge hopes of escape. He had spent several hours in meditation and prayer, when, turning to his companion, he said, in a whisper,

"Are you awake, War-Eagle?"

"Ugh," answered the chief, in guttural tones. "What would my brother have?"

"I would ask your forgiveness, Delaware, for having brought you into this strait. Had I taken your advice, perhaps we should not have been captured. But yet I could not but do so again," continued Rochester, as if reasoning with himself. "Murder a woman! Never!"

To this burst the chief replied by coolly saying. "The White Fawn is in the village, for I saw her, so there can be no doubt of her treachery. But my brother knows best."

Rochester answered only by a groan. Not having himself seen the Indian girl, he had persuaded himself she was absent, and that accident, not treachery had led to his arrest, and that of his companion. But this evidence was conclusive. For since the White Fawn was really present in the camp, yet had made no intercession for them, it was plain that she had been false to her promise.

"Are you quite sure, Delaware?" said Rochester, at last, clinging, with a strange tenacity, to his desire of exculpating the Indian girl.

"Haven't you confounded some other person with her?"

"The War-Eagle has a keen eye, and the White Fawn's step is not to be mistaken," replied the chief. "To-morrow my brother will see her; perhaps she will even light his pile."

Again our hero groaned, and then burst forth,

"Now may God forgive me, and curse——"

But here a hand was suddenly laid on his mouth, so that he could not proceed, and immediately a low, sweet voice whispered, "hush—lie still—I will cut your bands," and, even as it spoke, the withes parted, and Rochester felt both arms and legs free.

He would have sprung at once to his feet, but the same gentle hand held him down, while the voice continued, "do not move till I have freed your companion, and then creep silently after me—all depends on caution."

Our hero, all this time, had vainly striven to recognize the speaker, but the cabin was so dark that only a shadowy form was visible, crouched on the ground. He felt, certain, however, from the voice, and from the soft, warm little hand, that their unknown friend was a female; and his heart throbbed with strange delight at the conviction, for, if a woman, who could it be but the White Fawn herself?

"Now," whispered the voice again, and he saw the chief, at the same moment, rise from his recumbent attitude, and assume a creeping position, "follow me—cautiously—for if so much as a dry leaf crackles, we are lost."

With the words the speaker's shadowy form disappeared through the back of the wigwam, and was immediately followed by that of War-Eagle. Rochester lost not a moment in imitating the example thus set, and found that the egress was through an aperture, which had apparently either been lately made, or had escaped the eyes of the guard. Though now outside the cabin, his guide still continued in a creeping posture, but the night was so dark that our hero could not, even yet, distinguish the sex of his preserver. He followed in silence, therefore, noticing that whenever a wigwam was approached, in which the slightest sounds were heard, both she and War-Eagle crouched flat on the ground, and there remained, an undistinguishable shadow, until the voice entirely ceased. Moving in this cautious, but tardy manner, quite half an hour elapsed before they cleared the camp, and gained the shelter of the neighboring forest. During this interval, which seemed an age to Rochester, his heart beat with strange agitation. Every instant he expected to hear the shout which should announce that their flight was discovered; and he knew that if this happened before the woods were gained, there was no hope.

At last, however, they found themselves within the covert of the forest; and now, for the first time, the unknown guide turned to Rochester. He started back. It was the White Fawn that stood before him. Then, falling on one knee, as a knight of ancient romance might have done, he took her unresisting hand and began to pour forth his thanks.

But the Indian girl drew it quickly away, and in some embarrassment: then hurriedly said,

"White brother, farewell. The forest maiden has only done for you what you have already done for her; and in saving your life she but pays back the debt she owes for hers. But you have not a moment to lose," she continued, earnestly. "The young braves of my tribe are quick of foot, and, before long, they will be on your trail."

She had scarcely spoken, when a shout rose on the night air, from the direction of the village.

"We are discovered," cried the Indian girl, "all is lost."

"Then fly, and leave us to our fate," answered Rochester, starting to his feet, "you can gain the village undetected. As for us we must take our chance."

"No," cried the Indian maid, with generous self-devotion. "If I desert you, you are sure to be recaptured, and it shall never be said that the chief's daughter left any one in extremity." She seemed to reflect a moment, and then cried, "follow me, that is if you still trust me."

"Lead on," cried Rochester, "I believe in you as in my mother's purity. War-Eagle will come also." And he looked toward the savage, who had remained silent during this rapid conversation, and who now nodding followed the White Fawn and our hero with rapid strides.

A few steps brought the fugitives to a brook of running water, into which the Indian girl rapidly led the way. The shouts had, meantime, increased, but were leaving the village, showing that the trail had been struck and that the pursuit was begun. After moving down the brook for a considerable distance, the chief's daughter suddenly stepped on a shelf of a bare rock, and running rapidly along, for about a hundred yards, drew aside some bushes, disclosing the entrance to a narrow cave.

"Enter," she said, quickly. "No one knows of this refuge but myself, and, as our trail is lost, we can lie here safely concealed." Rochester and his companion entered, as she spoke: and then, closing the bushes, she hurried after them.

The cave was profoundly dark, but our hero knew, from the quick breathing of the Indian girl, that she was greatly agitated. Nor was it without cause, for the cries of the angry pursuers were fast approaching. In a few minutes

shouts were heard, apparently directly overhead, answering back the wild whoops from the other side of the stream. It was clear, from this, that the trail had been lost, at the point where the Indian girl had entered the brook, and that the savages were beating the shores, on either side, to recover the traces of the fugitives. The suspense was long intolerable, for the young braves, instead of hurrying onward, returned again and again, like baffled hounds, to the vicinity of the cave's mouth, until at last Rochester began to fear that the hiding-place was known to some of them, and that they were searching for it. The chief's daughter appeared to dread a similar result, for unconsciously she crept closer to our hero's side, laying her hand timidly on his arm as if appealing for protection; her woman's nature, for the time, triumphing over the heroism to which she had nerved herself during the earlier part of the pursuit. The veins of Rochester thrilled at that gentle touch; and seizing the soft, warm little hand, he pressed it to his heart. It was done without thought, nor could he have helped it, if his life had paid the forfeit; but the Indian girl started, like a frightened dove, withdrew her hand from his, and noiselessly moved to the other side of the cavern.

At last the sounds of pursuit died wholly away. As yet the cave was undiscovered.

"Had we not better pursue our journey now?" said Rochester, addressing the old chief.

"No, no," eagerly interrupted the Indian maid. "My white brother will be sure to fall in with some of my father's warriors. We must wait here till the sun comes and goes: and then, but not till then will it be safe to pursue our journey."

"The White Fawn speaks like a sage warrior, not like a giddy squaw," answered War-Eagle, interrupting the exclamation that was on Rochester's lips. "If we go forth now, our trail will be certain to be discovered; but if we wait till to-morrow night, by which time the hunt will be abandoned, we may escape."

"But what if we are discovered in the meantime? They may burn us out, like foxes in a hole," said Rochester, impetuously. "I don't care for myself, but only for the White Fawn; and I'd rather be roasted to death a dozen times than that a hair of her head should come to harm. If we leave the cave now, she can get back in safety to the village; and that is the great point, after all."

"My brother's heart is good, but he knows not of what he talks. The White Fawn has been missed before now; and it is more dangerous for her to return than to go on. We must stay here. And when we go, she must accompany us. But War-Eagle will make her his daughter," he added,

chivalrously, "and she shall never know she had another father."

Rochester said no more. The words of the old chief, in truth, had given him a strange pleasure. He had not thought before of the necessity of the White Fawn becoming a fugitive also; but he saw now that War-Eagle was right: and vague, yet happy visions began to float before him. He gave himself up unconsciously to these dreams. How long he indulged in them he never knew; they gradually faded into a deep sleep, however, from which he was finally aroused by hearing the sounds of weeping at his side. The grey light of morning was stealing into the cave, through an aperture in the bushes, and by it he discovered the Indian girl sitting dissolved in tears, while War-Eagle, like a bronze statue, gazed immovably at the mouth of the cave.

Rochester drew toward the weeping girl, and, after gazing a moment in silence, said, in a kind, gentle voice. "What ails my sister? Does she repent of what she has done? If so, say the word, and the white brave will deliver himself up at once."

The face of the White Fawn had been covered with her hands, from the first moment she had attracted Rochester's attention; but now she hastily withdrew them, and clasping him by the arm as he attempted to rise, forcibly held him.

"No, no, no," she said, rapidly, "the White Fawn repents not. But her father loved her, and she loved the old chief"—she spoke in a broken voice, "and it is but natural that she should weep. But her brother shall behold her tears no more."

Nor did he. All through that day, whose hours seemed protracted into ages, and whose unceasing suspense fretted the nerves of even Rochester nearly past endurance, she maintained her composure. A score of times, during that interval, the fugitives thought their hiding-place was on the point of being discovered; for scouting parties were continually abroad in search of the lost trail, and frequently approached almost to the

mouth of the cavern. But night, at last, delivered the three from their anxiety: the shouts of the savage hunters ceased; and now the eager fugitives were at liberty to go abroad.

All that night the little party hurried forward, War-Eagle leading the van, the White Fawn following, and Rochester bringing up the rear. Their safety depended on the number of leagues placed between them and their foes before morning; for their trail would be certain to be discovered soon after daylight, when a pursuit would be commenced. The number of miles traversed, that night, by the three fugitives, would be considered incredible by any one not familiar with the frontier. Their speed, however, saved their lives: they never heard more of their pursuers; but, on the third day reached the border fort from which they had set out, and where they were now welcomed with joy, having been given up for lost.

The Indian maid did not long remain the adopted daughter of War-Eagle, but, after a few months, took on herself a nearer and holier tie, by becoming Rochester's bride. The wedding took place at the close of the campaign, during which interval the White Fawn had continued in the fort, where the commandant's lady had taken charge of her education, so that, when our hero came back to claim her, she was able to add the charm of civilized accomplishments to the native graces of the forest. When attired in proper costume, she was scarcely recognizable as a child of the wilderness, so delicate was her complexion. Indeed, a lovelier bride was never given away, before or since, in all that beautiful region.

In later years, when the settlements had advanced westward, Rochester purchased a large tract of land on the shores of the Haunted Stream, and erected a stately mansion close to the spot where he had first seen the Indian maid. And there, to this day, his and her descendants live, prouder of their heroic ancestress, and deservedly so, than many an English duke of his Norman sires.

THE HIGH TOWER OF ST. JOSEPH'S.

BY MRS. EMMA W. DEMERITT.

CHAPTER I.

THE old sexton swung the massive Cathedral doors together, and turned the key in the lock. Then he stepped back on the pavement, and gazed up at the great tower, which rose nearly three hundred feet above his head, with its slender graceful spire distinctly outlined on the dusky evening sky.

"I could almost do it now," he muttered, "if it were not for these giddy spells. A curse upon this cruel illness, which has palsied the stoutest arm, and weakened the strongest nerves, in all Vienna! But I must find someone to take my place," he continued, as he drew his hat down over his eyes, and started for home. "It would never do for the Emperor to miss the customary salute from the tower."

All Vienna was astir: The gay capital was evidently donning its holiday robes. On every hand were preparations for some important event. Platforms dotted the public squares; bits of scaffolding clung to the façades of the principal buildings; huge wooden arches spanned the main avenues; while here and there tasteful groupings of the national flag made glowing patches of color on the cool gray-and-white background of stone and marble.

On the morrow, the Emperor would make his formal entry into the city. There was to be an imposing procession, with a review of imperial troops, ending with concerts at the principal theatres, a grand display of fireworks, and an unlimited flow of wine and beer. Upon such state occasions, it had been the old sexton's custom to take his stand on the narrow stone ledge which encircled the Cathedral tower, and from this giddy height to wave the imperial flag, as the Emperor passed in the street below.

But age and sickness had so weakened the old man's nerves that he dared not attempt the perilous feat, to-day.

He would miss hearing his name in all mouths; he would miss the cheers of the populace, the answering salute from the imperial troops; and, worst of all—for stronger than the old man's love of notoriety was his love of gain—he would miss the handsome sum of money with which the Emperor always acknowledged the daring act of homage. The old sexton ground his teeth at the thought, muttering:

"If either of the two at home had been a boy, I would have had someone to take my place, and we should have had the money all the same. But they are nothing but women—weak timid women—good for naught but to spend money."

"There goes old Caspar of the Cathedral," said one of two young men, whose greeting the sexton had returned with an ungracious frown: "grim and silent as ever."

"The crusty graybeard!" exclaimed the other, looking back over his shoulder. "I wonder what deviltry the old rat is plotting now? That black face means a gathering storm. Heaven pity the meek sister and the pretty step-daughter, if the thunder-cloud burst at home. Poor things! it gives one the heartache to think of them. With the old man's miserly ways and his fits of ill-temper, 'tis but a miserable life they lead."

"Why don't they leave him, then?" asked the first speaker. "No one would blame them."

"I'll tell thee why, Gabriel: because he has all their money. He gave his sister no peace until he got her portion of their father's estate. Ah! little peace she has had since, poor woman! She'd much better have kept it herself. Besides," the young man lowered his voice to a whisper, and looked anxiously around, to make sure that there was no one within hearing, "they dare not attempt to run away: the old wretch might murder them."

"Alas! the pretty step-daughter," returned Gabriel, with a sigh. "There's many a handsome lad in Vienna would give his head for a word with her, but the old man guards her like a dragon."

"So, ho! And so you, Gabriel, are a little touched, as well as the rest of us. I've seen the time when my heart beat fast at the sight of that trim figure, with the golden hair and downcast eyes, tripping along to Sunday service between old Caspar and the good Elsa. There isn't one of us whose heart-strings haven't thrilled at the sound of her low sweet voice; and many a night we've stood in the street below, and looked up to the light burning in her window, and watched for her shadow flitting back and forth. But that's past and gone. 'Twas but a foolish passion on our part, for the maiden had eyes but for one lover. It was a pure waste of heart-agony. But come: let us be going. I have a ribbon to buy

for my sweetheart, to wear on her pretty brown braids to-morrow."

And so, with laugh and jest, the youths passed on, and were quickly lost in the busy throng.

CHAPTER II.

In the meantime, old Caspar kept on his way. He hurried through the crowded, bustling city, until he came to the dark narrow street in which he lived. As he turned the corner, he caught a glimpse of a young man hastening away from one of the houses. He stopped short, and watched the retreating figure until it passed out of sight. Then he raised his hand, and shook it with a threatening gesture.

"Make the most of your stolen visit, young man," said he, "for I have a plan for frightening you love-sick swains from my pretty maiden yonder."

In a few moments, he reached his home, and, mounting the steep flight of stairs, entered a room where two females were busily engaged in preparing the evening meal. The older was a middle-aged woman, whose sad face told of suffering and patient endurance. The younger was a girl not more than eighteen years old, with a plump graceful figure and a complexion like a rose-leaf. Her fair hair was parted in a rippling mass over her smooth forehead, and was gathered at the back in a thick tress, revealing the lovely rounded contour of cheek and chin. In addition to these purely Saxon charms, she had an unusual and striking beauty: a pair of soft brown eyes, shaded by long curling lashes.

Both women glanced timidly at the old man; but they found the expression of his face anything but reassuring, and went on with their work without speaking.

"A pretty pair of snails, you two," he snarled, dropping into a chair, and throwing his hat on the floor. "Have I not told you again and again to put my supper on the table when you hear my step on the stairs?"

"But one cannot be always ready, you know, Caspar," returned his sister, meekly, as she set the pot of smoking chocolate before him.

"Bah! Cannot? But thou must: 'tis thy business to be ready. For what were women made, if not to wait upon their lords? But you have been loitering or gabbling, perhaps, with visitors. A woman's tongue should ever be idle, and her hands ever busy; but you two reverse the order, and keep the tongue wagging, while my supper waits. Let it not happen again."

His heavy eyebrows met in a frown, and his glittering eyes sought the young girl's face.

"Who was it whom I saw leaving the house a moment ago?"

The color faded from her cheek. Lie, she would not, come what might. She raised her clear eyes to the old man's stern face.

"It was Fritz," she said, simply.

"Fritz, indeed!" he sneered; and he imitated the drawing of a bow across a violin. "The fal-la-ing fiddler! Have I not forbidden him the house? The sneaking stripling of a fiddler! Much good may this visit do him: for 'twill be his last. Listen, my pretty Lena: I have a plan for providing thee speedily with a husband."

He rubbed his long thin hands exultingly.

"A man of spirit he shall be, and no puny twanger of calgut. So fair a maid deserves a brave mate. Trust to me for that. To-night will decide thy fate. Hush!" for the young girl had thrown herself forward with an imploring cry. "Cease thy whinings: for I like not the music of a woman's tongue. Bring the rest of my supper at once: for I must be off in time to catch these young swaggerers before they go home for the night. Go, pretty fool: for fool thou art, Lena. With such a face and figure as thine, thou mightst have wedded a titled nobleman, and had money and jewels without stint."

"Thank heaven, the child has no such ambition," muttered Elsa.

"Where's thy pride, girl?" continued Caspar, in an angry tone. "I verily believe thou wouldst be content to share the hut of some beggar woodcutter. 'Tis time I looked after thy interests a little more sharply."

Caspar hastily swallowed his supper, and left the house. As soon as the door closed behind him, the two women looked in each other's face apprehensively.

"Oh, what did he mean by those cruel words, Aunt Elsa?" cried Lena. "And what new cloud is this in our sky? Will the sun never shine for us?"

"Heaven only knows," returned the older woman, stroking the girl's golden hair with a soft caressing touch. "My poor child!"

"I have tried to be dutiful and industrious," said the girl. "I have done my best, all these long weary years, to please him; but he has never given me a kind word. I sometimes think perhaps, if I had been his own child, it would have been different."

Elsa shook her head. "It would have made no difference, Lena. It is his nature to be harsh and exacting. It was the same with thy mother as long as she lived. It has been the same with me as with thee. There is no room in his heart for love of anything save gold."

"But why does he hate Fritz so?" sobbed Lena. "What has the dear boy ever done to deserve such treatment?"

"He hates him as the bad ever hate the good: for the one is as upright and noble as the other is artful and wicked. Oh, I have such dreadful thoughts now and then. He is my brother; but—may heaven forgive me—I sometimes forget that we are children of the same mother."

In the course of an hour, old Caspar returned. They heard his heavy step on the stairs, and a muttered oath as he flung open the door. He walked straight to the table, and brought his fist down with a thud.

"Idiot!" he muttered. "He is the very last one of all the world who I thought would have the courage to accept. Sit you down," he added, turning to the women: "you may as well know what has happened."

"I told thee, girl," and he nodded in a surly manner at Lena, "that I would speedily provide thee with a husband. That was my errand down-town to-night."

A frightened look passed over the girl's beautiful face, as the old man continued, gruffly:

"I went straight to the public house on the Platz: for I well knew, if I wanted to meet a crowd of young men, that was where I should most surely find them. And I publicly announced, and pledged my honor—and caused it, moreover, to be put in writing—that whoever should take my place on the ledge of the tower, to-morrow, and wave the imperial flag as the Emperor passed, should have the hand of my pretty Lena here."

"It turned out as I had thought: they stared, and shrugged their shoulders, and shrank back. I thought I had rid my door-step forever of thy lovers, when forth steps a young man—pale, but determined—and calls out, in a ringing voice: 'I accept the offer, Herr Caspar.' Now, curse him, who do you think he was?"

Lena bent eagerly forward, and stood with her hands clasped on her bosom, her red lips apart, and a questioning look in her large brown eyes.

"Fritz! Fritz, of all others!" said the old man, in his fury raising his voice to a shriek. "I thought, if anyone had the hardihood to accept, it would have been the carpenter, Hans—a man bold and daring—a man after my own heart; and his trade, moreover, had learned him to carry a steady head. But the meek fiddler, who has been sitting in a corner and fuf-la-ing and tweedle-dee-ing all his life—who ever would have thought of him?"

Lena stood in the middle of the room, moaning, in a low piteous voice:

"Fritz! my Fritz! Oh, my Fritz!"

A cruel smile passed over the old sexton's face.

"But old Caspar is not outwitted, for all that," he said. "It won't keep me awake: I shall sleep soundly enough, never fear. My pretty maiden will wait in vain for her lover to claim her. It takes a steady head to climb the little winding staircase in the tower, let alone to stand on the 'iny ledge outside. He'll fall, and be dashed to pieces. 'Twill serve him right, too, and 'twill rid me easily of a pest."

He took up a lighted candle, and turned toward the door.

"Go to bed, both of you," he said; "I want an early breakfast to-morrow: for I have much to do yet on the decorations of the Cathedral."

"Can we help, in any way, Caspar?" gently asked his sister.

"Help? No! You are of no use on such occasions. If Lena there had been a boy, I might have had someone to send up ladders and climb scaffolding, instead of risking my neck as I now do."

He shuffled out of the room, grumbling, as he spoke, and closed the door with a violent jar.

CHAPTER III.

"AUNT ELSA," cried Lena, wildly, "I must go to Fritz at once. It is madness for him to think of such a thing."

"Not yet, my child. Thou must have patience for awhile. Oh, it was a cruel thing for Caspar to do. If the carpenter—Hans—had accepted his offer, I shudder to think what a hard lot would have been thine."

"He is a bold bad man, Aunt Elsa. The step-father well said that he was a man after his own heart."

"Hush! For aught I know, someone," and Elsa motioned with her head toward the door by which her brother had left, "may be listening. We must linger here for a while yet, as if putting things in order for the morrow. After that, let us go to our rooms, as if we were preparing for bed as usual. Then, when Caspar is asleep, we will seek Fritz. Come, dear heart: it will give us a few quiet moments for prayer; and, surely, we need it now, if ever."

It was not long before the old sexton's room was darkened, and, as soon as the house was still, the two women put on their cloaks and stole softly downstairs and out into the deserted street. They had only gone a few steps, when they were met by the young man of whom they were in search.

"Come with me," said he. "Mother is waiting. She was sure you would come."

He grasped Lena's cold little hands in both of his. "What—sobbing, little one?" he exclaimed, in a tender voice. "I want smiles rather than tears; they will better give me courage to win my bride."

In a few moments, they entered a room where the Widow Haller sat rocking, by a huge porcelain stove. The three women were soon locked in a close embrace.

"And hast thou come, Lena, to add thy entreaties to mine? The good God give thy tongue power to do what mine has failed to accomplish. Beg Fritz not to go."

But neither the tearful pleadings of the young girl nor the expostulations of the older women were able to shake the young man's resolution.

"It is of no use, sweetheart," he said, lifting Lena's drooping head from his bosom. "Ask me anything but that, and see how quickly I will grant it. My mind is made up: no power on earth can turn me. It is the only way, child, to free thee from thy dreary prison-life and cruel keeper. Do not vex and weary me by this useless asking, for I need all my strength and spirits for my morrow's work."

"Besides," a bright smile lighted his thoughtful face, "I shall succeed—never fear. We'll show them that love laughs at steeples as well as at locksmiths. And moreover, dears, I shall have the prayers of the three best women in the world, and those of the good priest besides. I saw him, but a moment ago, and his parting blessing lingers yet in my ears."

"But if thou shouldst fail?" And Lena's voice broke into a sob.

"I must not fail," he answered, gravely.

The four sat talking, for a few moments, and then separated for the night: Fritz going home with Elsa and Lena, and taking a sad leave of them at the door.

The walk homeward through the cold air helped to quiet the young man's nerves, and, when he rounded a corner of the street and caught a glimpse of the Platz Cathedral, he was able to look without a tremor at the huge pile looming up darkly in the starlight. He stood for some time gazing at the slender spire, as if the sight had a strange fascination for him.

"There lies life or death, as God shall will," he thought. Then he measured the distance with his eyes.

"'Twould be a fearful fall," he murmured, calmly; "but I must not so much as give one thought to the distance from the tower to the sidewalk. It is safe enough, if one can but bring himself to believe it. Were the tower only twenty feet from the ground, a baby might

balance itself on the ledge with the utmost security. It is the thought of the height that makes the feat so dangerous. If I can but banish that from my mind, I shall be as safe as I am at this moment on the firm pavement. None but grim old Caspar would ever have hit upon such a way of saluting the Emperor; and, for my part, I wish he had chosen a safer method of showing his loyalty. But, if I win, Lena's happiness is assured: for the old man dare not refuse to fulfil his part of the contract. Only I must not get dizzy. I wish I was more used to great heights."

CHAPTER IV.

A short walk brought him to his home, and, as he passed through the long hall on his way to his mother's room, a door was suddenly opened, a bright light streamed across his path, a slender figure flitted into the passageway, and a low voice said:

"I have been waiting for you, Herr Fritz. I knew your step on the stairs."

"How you startled me, Greta! I thought all in the house were asleep long ago."

"Asleep? I could not sleep, and I have been watching for you so anxiously."

"You look like a spirit, Greta, with your white shawl and pale face."

She was a deformed orphaned little dressmaker, who rented two rooms opposite the Haller apartment. Fritz and his mother, from the first, had taken a deep interest in the shy gentle girl, and by unnumbered acts of kindness had helped to make her lonely lot more bright and cheerful. She was passionately fond of music, and, when the pain in her back was very bad, and she was obliged to lie in bed, Fritz would open the door of his room, and play on his violin for her for hours. And, at such times, she would look up to the Widow Haller, seated at her bedside, and say, with a grateful smile:

"I think, when my time comes, I should like to die thus, with your kind face bending over me, and Herr Fritz's beautiful music ringing in my ears."

She always wore a shawl, or sack, or loose mantle of some kind, which concealed her deformity so well that it was hardly noticeable unless one looked at her closely.

She stood before Fritz now, looking up at him with her wide-open pathetic gray eyes.

"Oh, Herr Fritz, is it true—all this about the Cathedral tower?"

"Who told you, Greta?"

"Your mother. And, do you know—she is breaking her heart over it! And there are other

hearts, too, Herr Fritz, that are heavy and sad because of your willfulness."

She pressed her thin hands to her bosom.

"Greta, I am really angry with you. What if I succeed? You women all talk in the same strain: you seem determined that I shall fail."

"Not determined—but oh, so fearful!"

"Well, as I said before, what if I succeed?"

"May God so will it, Herr Fritz," she answered, solemnly. "But it is a frightful risk."

"And it is for such a treasure!" he replied, with a radiant smile.

"Yes, I can well understand," she said, with a little shiver.

"Greta, you are shivering; it is too chilly here: you will take cold. Let us go inside."

He led her through the open door into the tiny apartment. The warmth and the soft candle-light gave it an air of cosy comfort, in spite of the bare floor and scanty furniture. It was as scrupulously neat as a nun's cell. Spotless white curtains draped the narrow windows, while a few cheap prints, in frames of Fritz's making, hung on the walls. A bridal dress of shimmering satin, with garniture of costly lace, was thrown over the back of a chair, and the table was heaped with rolls of bright-colored silks and velvets and bits of ribbon and fringe. Greta did not sit down, but stood looking up at Fritz, who leaned his elbow on the tall chiffonier.

"Your mother still hopes that you will think better of this rash resolve."

He shook his head.

"Have you thought of the cost?"

"Yes, Greta. I believe I do not value my life as highly as the rest of you."

"I do not suppose that anything a poor little body like me could say would have any influence," she replied, sadly.

"Greta," he asked, impulsively, "if one you loved had a very hard and unhappy life, would you not do anything to help make a way of escape?"

"There is nothing I would not do or dare for one I loved," she answered, as impulsively. "Life itself would be of no account. But it is different with you, Herr Fritz: I should not be missed, but you have so much to live for. There are so many whose happiness is bound up with yours. Oh, my friend, your life is a very precious thing: you have no right to throw it away. You have been so kind—so kind to me," she continued, after a moment's pause. "Had I been a queen on her throne, you could not have treated me with more respect. All the joy I have ever known has come through you—and through your mother," she added, with some embarrass-

ment. "I have often wondered what I could do to repay you. Perhaps the time is near when I can make some return besides my poor thanks."

"You can give me your prayers to-morrow, you know," said Fritz, gently.

"You would have had them without the asking, Herr Fritz." Here she uttered a sharp cry: "Oh, that dreadful, dreadful tower! I see it before me all the time. Is the pretty Lena willing that you should try? Were I in her place," and she flushed scarlet, "I would not let you do this terrible thing. You will get dizzy, and fall. Oh! I would stop you, somehow."

"You could no more stop me than could she. I have accepted Caspar's offer, and I shall make the attempt. All these useless appeals only unnerve me. It is time that I tried to get some rest, although I fear but little sleep will visit me to-night."

Greta darted forward, as he started for the door.

"Oh, Herr Fritz," she said, with great agitation, "I am a poor deformed little dressmaker. Nobody cares for me. I have nothing to live for. I shall be glad when the time comes to hide myself and my poor crooked back in the grave. Let me take your place. Let me cress on the ledge, and wave the flag. If I fall, no one will be the sadder for my loss. Nobody will miss poor Greta."

Fritz was deeply touched by her earnestness. But he said: "It cannot be, dear Greta. You know not what you are asking."

But she threw herself on her knees at his feet, and, seizing his hand, covered it with kisses and tears.

"It is my prayer," she cried; "do not refuse me. Oh, Herr Fritz, let me do this one thing for you!"

Fritz raised her from the floor. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Greta, dear friend; but, when you think it over calmly, you will see that it is impossible. You are excited and tired. Try to get some rest."

She shook her head mournfully. "There is no rest for me while you are in danger," she said.

But he answered, soothingly:

"At this time to-morrow, God willing, I shall be safe back with Lena and mother and you, and we will laugh to think how needless was all our alarm and worry. And then, Greta, when Lena and I have a home of our own, there will always be a place and a warm welcome for the little woman who would have risked so much for our happiness. Now, good-night."

When Fritz reached his room, he was too excited to sleep. He took his violin from its case, and

begin to play, hoping in this way to quell the tumult in his mind. And, as he played, a restful peace stole over him, and he kept on far into the night.

After Fritz left, Greta threw herself in an agony of grief on her knees, by a chair, sobbing as if her heart would break. As the first notes of the familiar strain reached her ears, she raised her head and listened intently. Then she rose and placed the door ajar, so as to catch even the faintest pianissimo shading, and sank down in a forlorn heap on the floor, and gave herself up to the spell of the witching melody.

"For the last time," she said, with a wan little smile. "Oh, how little does he know! But Lena is good and true, and she will make him very, very happy."

CHAPTER V.

THE morning dawned clear and cold. It was the day of all others for a street-paueant. The sky was of the deepest blue, the crisp frosty air was strangely exhilarating. The showy uniforms of the officers, mingling with the many-colored national costumes of Hungary, Poland, and the Tyrol, made a kaleidoscopic succession of colors as the immense crowd surged through the streets.

The procession was due at the Cathedral shortly after noon; but, owing to some delay, it was nearly dark when the booming of cannon from the Platz announced the approach of the imperial cortège. The hours of waiting seemed as so many weary years to the impatient Fritz, who sat in a little room adjoining the organ-loft, and to the three pale anxious women, who knelt at the altar of a little chapel, their lips moving in silent prayer.

But old Caspar was in high glee.

"The luck is all on my side," he chuckled, rubbing his hands triumphantly. "This delay will try his nerves to the utmost."

Once or twice, he peeped shyly through the partially-opened door, and, to his dismay, beheld Fritz sitting quietly, without any signs of agitation.

"If he would but walk the floor, or drum with his fingers on the bench, or even bite his lips, I should be better pleased," thought the old sexton.

At the sound of the cannon, announcing the approach of the procession, Fritz sprang to his feet. At the same moment, old Caspar appeared, with a furled flag in his hand.

"There's no time to be lost, my brave Fritz," said he. "Thou mayest have perhaps five minutes to spare when thou reachest the tower, but no more."

Fritz reached out his hand for the flag.

"But old Caspar shook his head. "Not so fast, my lad," returned he. "Although there is but little love betwixt us, yet, to show thee how fair a man I am, I will help thee as far as I can. Do thou go first, and I will follow, and hand thee the flag when thou art safely outside."

The first part of the ascent was easy enough, as the stairs were rough open steps, with a hand-rail for protection. Fritz tripped up quickly, leading the way; but old Caspar was obliged to pause once or twice, to get his breath.

The next flight was more trying, as the ladder was slight, and supported only by iron rods fastened to the wall. Up, up, they went, Fritz calm and hopeful, old Caspar grim and sullen.

"Wait till thou reachest the little winding staircase," thought the sexton: "thy step will not be so light, nor thy voice so cheery, my daring lover."

They reached the square platform at last, from which rose the tiny hanging staircase, winding upward until it ended at the little sliding-door which gave access to the narrow ledge outside, on which Fritz was to stand. So slight and narrow was this ledge, that it seemed hardly strong enough, or wide enough, for a child.

As one stood on the platform and looked below, it was enough to make the steadiest head swim to see the immense distance beneath, that was traversed only by the network of crossing stairs. But there stood Fritz, surveying it calmly.

The sight maddened the old sexton. "The ladder is not strong enough for two," said he. "When thou reachest the little sliding-door, thou must let thyself out, feet foremost, until thy toes touch the ledge. Then thou must creep around to the opposite side of the tower, and wave the flag. Go!"

Fritz made no reply, but went on, climbing up as nimbly as a cat. He reached the little door, and, looking fearlessly out, slowly and cautiously lowered himself to the ledge below.

Old Caspar followed more slowly, trembling from head to foot with suppressed rage.

He passed out the flag to Fritz.

"Feel thy way carefully," he said: "for thou hast but ten inches of foothold. When thou reachest the opposite side of the spire, slip one hand through an iron ring which thou wilt find there, and, when thou hearest the great gun on the Platz, wave thy flag. There is another ring just above the sliding-door: 'twill help thee greatly."

Fritz took the flag, and crept, step by step, along the narrow ledge. After a few moments' suspense, his voice sounded cheerily, and without a quiver, through the open door.

"All right," it said; "I'm ready now for the signal."

Old Caspar's cheeks and lips were white with anger. His features grew distorted by passion. There was an ominous gleam in his wicked black eyes. He bent down over the door, and listened eagerly. As he lifted his face, it was as the face of some exultant demon. He had fastened the door so that Fritz could not return.

"Aye, cling fast, my sighing fiddler," he muttered: "for thy grip is for life or death. Thou wilt either fling thyself down in despair, or lose thy hold, and be dashed to pieces, when thou findest the trap thou art in. Thy sweetheart will wait in vain for her brave young lover."

He started, as he spoke, to go down. Suddenly, he paused, and hastily brushed his hand across his eyes.

"The giddiness again!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my, God, were I but safely below!"

With the words, he staggered, and stood for a moment, with his body swaying unsteadily to and fro. Then he missed his foothold, and, clutching wildly at the empty air, plunged headlong into the space below.

CHAPTER VI.

In the meantime, Fritz waited patiently for the signal; nor did he have to wait long, for in a moment more the great cannon thundered from the Platz. He held out the flag, and slowly waved it to and fro, and heard the answering salute from the imperial troops. Then he crept once more along the narrow ledge, and, steadying himself by the iron ring, he stooped and felt for the sliding-door.

It was closed! He pushed as hard as he dared in his cramped position, but he could not move it.

"Merciful God!" he cried, with a start which nearly caused him to lose his hold. "I see it all now! Old Caspar has fastened the door, and left me to my fate!"

For a moment, the shock made him faint; but the cold air, blowing freshly on his bared head, revived him.

His first impulse was to shout for help; then he smiled derisively at such childish folly. How could he hope to make his voice heard above the din of the crowded streets?

"Better keep my strength, instead of wasting it in useless shouting," he thought. "I shall need it all."

Then he thought: "Shall I drop the flag? The falling standard may possibly attract attention, and lead to a rescue. Yet no: the idea is absurd. No one will understand it."

Even in that moment of supreme peril, however, his unselfish nature asserted itself. "Besides," he said, "the flag might injure a passer-by, in its swift descent. I will not save my life at such a risk."

Other thoughts succeeded this.

"If there were only a moon to-night," he said to himself, "there would be a possibility of my escape: for someone might look up at the tower by chance, and see me. But, as it is— No, there is no likelihood of my being discovered. My doom is sealed."

He tried to keep back the despairing thoughts that nearly made him frantic: for he knew that, the more calm and cool he was, the greater would be his chances of escape. He stood there, clinging to the iron ring above the door, as motionless as if he had been carved out of stone.

When the evening chimes were rung, he bowed his head, and, with trembling lips, repeated the "Angelus." Once or twice, his arms ached, and he carefully shifted his position, to ease the strained muscles. One by one, the stars came out in the dusky space overhead, until the sky was studded with the glittering golden points. Then the great bells, of the Cathedral slowly tolled the time.

"Two hours! No more!" he said. "Ah! it has seemed a lifetime!"

The chances were but slight, he reflected, that his absence would cause any alarm. It is true that Lena might miss him, for he had made arrangements to have word sent as soon as he had accomplished his perilous feat: friend Gabriel was to watch until he had waved the flag and reached the little door in safety, and then he was to set off without a moment's delay, and carry the good tidings to the three waiting women: but he had charged Lena, over and over again, not to think it strange if he did not come to her at once, as he had an engagement to play at one of the theatres, and there was no telling how late he might be detained—perhaps until the early morning hours.

As he thought of all this, he said:

"And old Caspar knew it! Oh, the cruel villain! he has well planned."

The hours dragged on. Fritz was shivering with the cold, for his scanty clothing was but an insignificant protection against the frosty night-sir. His head throbbed with pain; every joint was stiff and aching.

"How long," he thought, "can I endure the terrible strain on body and mind? Would it not be better to throw myself down, and end it all? But there is poor little Lena: she would remain forever in old Caspar's power."

No, for her dear sake he would try to hold on, even to the very last. Perhaps, in time, the good God would hear his prayer, for every breath that he drew was one agonized petition: "Oh, my Father, help!"

But the night wore on, and, every moment, death seemed to Fritz more inevitable. He could hardly hope to hold out much longer, certainly not until morning.

His brain, at last, began to give way, under the strain.

"Well, what of it? I will not have so far to go," he said, "in order to reach heaven, as most people. Ha! ha!"

The echo of his bitter mocking mirth shocked him, however, and recalled him to himself. "Great heavens!" he cried, "I am not going mad, am I? Yet people have lost their reasons for less cause."

The great clock boomed out another hour.

"Am I fit for death?" he mused. "Only last Sunday, the good priest said that, if one wished to die happy, he must make his peace with the world; and, if there was any hatred or bitter feeling in the heart, it must be put away: for, if we did not forgive, neither would our Heavenly Father."

"Can I forgive old Caspar?" he thought. "Must I?"

Long and bitter was the struggle in Fritz's heart, for he was wrestling with the mighty spirit of hatred. At last, just as the Cathedral bells tolled the midnight hour, he raised his head toward the sky. It was pale and haggard, but a divine peace rested on it.

"I forgive him!" he cried. "Blessed be God for the victory! I am prepared, come what may. If God give me strength to hold out, all is well; if not—"

He shuddered, gave an involuntary glance downward, and went on, huskily: "If not, I am ready." Then he shut his eyes.

The constellations climbed higher and higher in the heavens. Then they slowly sank, until they neared the western horizon. The busy hum of the street had long ceased. Profound stillness brooded over the whole city. Fritz thought of Lena, his mother, and Greta.

"They are probably together," he said; "for their painful vigil is ended, and their hearts are filled with joyous anticipations. To-morrow, early, they expect to see me."

The night-air grew icy cold. But still that motionless figure stood on the narrow ledge: its pale weary face resting against the uplifted hand, which grasped the iron ring.

"Oh, God! who art ever near to those who

need thee, be swift to hear and save thy child! Oh, blessed Virgin Mother! plead for thy servant!" Thus he prayed.

CHAPTER VII.

As soon as Gabriel carried the joyful tidings of Fritz's success to the anxious women, Elsa and Lena left the Widow Muller and started for home.

"Do thou go to bed at once, Lena," said Elsa. "This has been a trying time for thee. Fritz said he would not be able to come to thee before to-morrow. A good night's rest will bring back the roses to thy cheeks. Surely, thou wouldst not have him find such a pale little bride awaiting him, in the morning? Nor will we wait for Caspar. We never know when he is coming home, and he will be probably late: he will be celebrating the day somewhere. So, go to bed, child."

But Lena could not sleep. She was troubled and nervous: she knew not why. She drew a chair to the window, and sat for a long time looking out at the starlit sky. At last, her head drooped on the window-seat, and she was soon sound asleep. Ah! little did she suspect the truth.

It was early morning when her heavy eyes opened, and Elsa stood in the doorway, with an anxious, even frightened, face.

"Fritz has not come yet," she said; "and Caspar is not home. What can it mean?"

But, even as she spoke, there was a loud knock at the door. Elsa ran downstairs, and Lena's quick ears caught the words as the stranger entered. It was Gabriel. To explain his appearance, however, we must go back several hours in our story.

When Fritz parted from Greta, as we have described, she stood for a moment in the middle of the room, with her hands extended towards him, as if in benediction. A wistful smile was on her pale patient face, and her eyes shone with unutterable tenderness, as she watched him out of sight. Fritz, as he turned to close the door behind him, saw this; and he never forgot it, to his dying day.

Greta did not even attempt to go to bed. She was too anxious, and too restless in consequence. At times, she walked up and down the room, nervously twisting her fingers together. At times, she burst into sobs. Then she would fall on her knees and pray. "Oh, blessed Saviour!" she cried, "oh, holy Virgin! intercede for him, and save his life—only save his life! Make him happy—make him happy, no matter what becomes of me."

The hours wore on. As the time approached when Fritz might be expected home, Greta's

nervous excitement increased. She knew of his engagement to play at the theatre, after the procession was over; and did not expect him, therefore, until after midnight. But, when the twelve strokes rang out from the neighboring church-tower, and he did not come, she began to fear something had happened. She was familiar with his step, and she now took her place, just within the door, to listen. The streets were profoundly still, by this time; but now and then the sound of a solitary tread rose on the night-air, so that Greta more than once caught her breath in a fervor of thankfulness, thinking it was that of Fritz. But the tread passed on. Now and then, also, the voice of some belated person, singing on his way home, was heard. But it was not the voice of Fritz.

"Ah," she said, suddenly, after one of these disappointments, "why did I not think of it before? Fritz has waved the flag successfully, has played at the theatre, and has been entertaining some of his friends at supper, to celebrate his triumph. That would explain why he is so late."

But, though one or two other belated persons went singing by, though occasionally one or two other silent pedestrians hurried past, no voice was that of Fritz, no step was his. The hours passed. Greta wept, and prayed, and walked the room, and wrung her hands, and wept and prayed again; but all to no purpose: no Fritz appeared.

At last, the suspense became intolerable. Greta felt that she must do something, or she should die. We have all felt thus, in moments of great extremity—at least, all who are of nervous organizations like hers. She threw on her hat and cloak hurriedly, crept stealthily downstairs, and closed the outer door softly after her. Then suddenly she began to run.

She began to run towards St. Joseph's. For, all at once, just as she turned the knob of the door, a suspicion of the truth flashed upon her. It came like a revelation. "Oh, why did I not think of it before?" she cried. "Old Caspar hates Fritz, and has played him some wicked trick—perhaps locked him in. Yes! that is it. If Fritz were not locked in, he would have been home long ago. But now—now—oh, holy Virgin!—he is, perhaps, lying dead at the foot of the tower, shattered and—"

The idea was too dreadful; she covered her face with her hands; she shuddered as in an ague-fit.

She ran on, nevertheless, all this while. St. Joseph's was not far off now: it was, in fact, only around the corner. She almost feared

to turn that corner; but she ran faster than ever, nevertheless.

She had turned the corner. The high tower rose directly in front of her. But she did not look up. She was sure there was something horrible lying at its foot—something that froze her heart, even to think of—and yet which she must brave herself to meet; and she did brave herself, going straight up to it: a black shapeless mass on the pavement—the pavement that gleamed spectrally in the white light of dawn.

She started back—started back with a shriek—and then fell on her knees. But the cry was one of joy, not of despair: for what she had seen was but a shadow, cast by a bit of sculpture on the side of the Cathedral. She fell on her knees: but it was to kiss the spot, and to exclaim, with a flood of grateful tears: "Oh, thank God! thank God!"

Then she sprang to her feet as suddenly: for, faint and far, a shout seemed to come down from the very top of the tower. Her heart was in her throat. It was a voice that she surely knew. She rushed across the street, so as to see all the way up the lofty steeple, and there—yes! there—outlined against the morning sky, just reddening with the sunrise, was a human figure—that of Fritz himself!

She rent the air with calls for help, with shriek on shriek, with passionate cries. Then, as first one, and afterwards half a dozen, watchmen, roused from sleep at their posts, came running up, she fell to the ground, in a dead faint.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Gabriel, as we have said.

"Where's the Fraulein Lena?" he cried. "For the love of God, let her come quickly. Fritz has been clinging to the spire all the night through. But he is alive. They are taking him down from the tower now. And old Caspar has fallen from the stairs. He may die: I did not stop to learn. Greta found it all out. If she hadn't, Fritz would have died." And, following him, they hurried to St. Joseph's.

A large and excited throng of people had gathered on the Platz before the Cathedral. In the midst stood Fritz, supported by two men. But his nearest friend would have failed to recognize him: his cheeks were sunken and sallow, his once brown locks were sprinkled with white as if by old-age.

The crowd drew back silently, and made way for Lena, who came running at a quick pace down the Platz.

Fritz started when he saw her, and feebly waved her back.

"No, no!" he cried, sadly. "'Tis not thy Fritz. Thy young lover has become a broken old man. Thou wilt not care for such a scarecrow bridegroom."

But Lena had thrown herself on his breast; and, entwining her arm around his neck, she laid her soft rosy cheek against his face.

"Oh, my beloved Fritz," she said, brokenly, "it was all for me! for me!"

She lifted her hand, and stroked and stroked his hair tenderly.

"What does it matter?" she asked, smiling through a mist of falling tears. "In a few years, I shall be the same. Thou hast but grown old a little in advance of me. But oh! if I had only been the one to find thee. Dear blessed Greta—where is she?"

But they looked in vain for Greta. The girl had disappeared.

Old Caspar, when picked up at the foot of the staircase, was found to be mangled and senseless, but still alive; and, though it was many days before he regained his consciousness, he did live, though it was evident from the first that he would be a helpless misshapen cripple for life.

But a wonderful change had come over the old man: he was as patient and gentle and submissive as a little child. Elsa wondered at it, while she rejoiced.

"Thou art too good, my poor Elsa," he would murmur, as she hovered over him, trying in some way to minister to his comfort. "I have been but a sad brute to thee and to Lena."

But there was something weighing heavily on the old man's conscience, and the cloud did not lift from his spirits until, one day, with Fritz and Lena and the good priest at his bedside, he confessed his crime, and received forgiveness.

"Do not vex thyself, Elsa, with fears for the future," he said to her, one morning. "We shall be well provided for. By my miserly habits, I have saved much money. I am a far richer man than thou couldst imagine. There is enough to keep me and thee in comfort—yes, in luxury,

if we cared for that—all our days, and to spare for a handsome dower for Lena. And then, when we are gone, Fritz must have it all. It is the best I can do to atone for my sin. It was a frightful fall, my poor Elsa," and he pointed to his misshapen limbs. "It ruined my body; but it saved my soul."

But where was Greta all this time? For none of her friends had seen her since that dreadful night. This is what happened.

When Fritz returned home, that day, he found a note from Greta, saying that she should thank God on her knees, day and night, for his escape. She wrote that "she had been called suddenly away from home, but that he would hear from her soon." Yet she gave no clue as to where she had gone.

As day after day passed, and she did not return, Fritz and his mother grew very uneasy over her prolonged absence. But, one morning, a large box came for Fritz, and, when he opened it, there, in all its purity and freshness, lay an exquisite bridal-dress, made as only Greta's deft fingers could make anything. On the top was a note, with his address.

He opened it with trembling fingers, and read the following words:

"BELOVED FRIEND:

"It is the bridal-dress for the pretty Lena. Tell her I have sewed in, with every stitch, my loving prayers and good-wishes. I shall never see you more. The dress was all I could do to repay you for your great kindness. On that dreadful night, I made a solemn vow that, if heaven spared your life, I would enter a convent, and devote the rest of my days to God's service.

"And, when you and your sweet wife think of me," she went on to say, "think of me as watching by the sick, visiting the poor, and teaching little children, and praying for you and yours always.

"Herr Fritz, farewell, and God keep you!"

"Greta."

THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'COBWEBS,' ETC., ETC.



T a rustic inn, up among the hills, two young men sat talking. One was an artist in search of the picturesque, the other his friend, who had accompanied him.

"Such an adventure as I had this morning," said the latter, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"As to how?" answered the other, lazily.

"Well, you know I went out to make a cast for trout while you were sketching. Tired out, at last I came to the little ferry you know so well, and, instead of the old fellow who usually rowed the boat, I found one of the prettiest girls I ever saw."

"His daughter, I suppose."

"Presumably. But, if so, only another illustration of my republican notion—if any were needed—that birth and fortune do not necessarily make beauty."

"Didn't you find her grammar rather halting? It's there where true rusticity shows itself."

"She was too shy to talk much. I tried in vain to start a flirtation, and, when that failed, to get her to talk of herself and her belongings; but all I could wring from her was that the old ferryman was down with rheumatism, and she was taking his place. 'Five cents' fare, sir,' she added, coolly, as we reached the opposite shore; and with that she held the skiff with a boat-hook, while I stepped ashore. When I turned to bow to her, after having climbed the bank, I saw her rowing back; nor did she ever look my way."

Harry Mordant was not especially susceptible. In fact, he had run the gauntlet of several seasons and was yet heart-whole. Perhaps one reason of this was that, from his earliest boyhood, it had been impressed on him that he was to marry a certain Lily Wentworth, a fourth or fifth cousin of his, as soon as she grew up. His father and hers had been lifelong friends, and the arrangement had been made between the two old men; a very sensible arrangement, as they considered, since it would unite two large fortunes, both Lily and Harry being only children. As for Harry, he accepted his fate quite resignedly. It was a thing that had to be; and, since he had never met any girl he could love, as he had read in novels girls were loved, he concluded that either he was unimpressionable or that such love was a mere fiction of the romancer. But now, for the first time, he began to doubt. For not only on that first day, but on every day for a week, he had somehow found he had to cross the ferry, and some days more than once, and the result was that, before the week was out, he was hopelessly in love with the ferryman's pretty niece.

"No, she is not his daughter," he told his friend: "that much I've found out. She must be his niece. I hear he has one, who lives with him. That much I learned from a lout of a boy I saw picking berries near there, yesterday, and whom I took the liberty to cross-question."

"Is she as shy as at first?"

"Not entirely. She talks—even eloquently, at times—as to the books she has read, her love of flowers. Why, she knows every wild blossom she sees! But, at other times, I can hardly get her to say a word."

"Look here, old fellow," said his friend: "don't you think we'd better pack up and be off? You're falling in love, very bad. And, considering what I know about Miss Wentworth and you, that's a contingency not at all desirable."



"But we only know them slightly; in fact, since I think of it, we don't know them at all. You brought a letter of introduction to them. Mr. Lethington called, and we were out; you called, he was out; and then came the invitation. You wouldn't know each other if you met."

"But they're such swell people. It would be rude not to go, especially since I wrote and asked for an invitation for you, and Mrs. Lethington was so good as to send one. Besides, I should like you to see the grounds. Even from the glimpses I caught during my drive from the lodge to the house, I could discern they were beautifully laid out, with the rarest trees, and each one perfect in itself."

"I have been struck by the house, even at a distance: I've seen it across the lake. Once I tried to sketch the view, putting in some swans that came sailing along. Here it is. Picturesque, isn't

Harry flushed up to the roots of his hair.

"Oh, hang Miss Wentworth!" he said, at last. "I had forgotten all about her."

"Where is she now?"

"On the ocean, I believe. You know she has been abroad for five years, completing her education, first in Paris and then by a year of travel. I am to meet her at Newport next month. She and her people—that is, papa and mamma—were to leave Paris yesterday for Havre, where they were to take the French steamer."

"My advice is more necessary than ever: Leave this at once."

"Oh, confound it, but I can't! We've accepted an invitation to that ball, at the Lethingtons', for to-morrow night."

it? Of course, I should like to go; only, for your sake, I think we had better leave."

"But we can't," Harry blurted out, after gnawing his mustache for a minute. "I can't, at least, until after to-morrow night: I must go to the ball."

"What! Is your fair innamorata going? I didn't know that ferrymen's nieces were asked to such swell places as the Lethingtons'. But perhaps Mr. Lethington contemplates running for Congress, and so wishes to make himself popular."

"No—she isn't," almost snapped Harry. "That's just it. She's only a ferryman's daughter; though to keep up distinctions in this republican country is simply absurd."

"Well, yes—in one sense. But remember: while politically we are a republic, in social matters we are still as exclusive as our English ancestors. However, since your paragon can't go, why must you?"

"The fact is," stammered Harry, driven to the wall, "I said something about going to this ball, and she told me that the servants and poorer neighbors were allowed to come inside the grounds and look in the windows. And—and—"

"Oh, I understand. Spare your blushes. You promised to steal and join her, and look in the windows too." And he burst into a hearty laugh. "Only, my boy, don't let your hostess catch you at it."

This was too much for Harry. To be laughed at was more than he could bear. So, to avoid quarreling outright with his friend, he snatched his hat and hastily left the room.

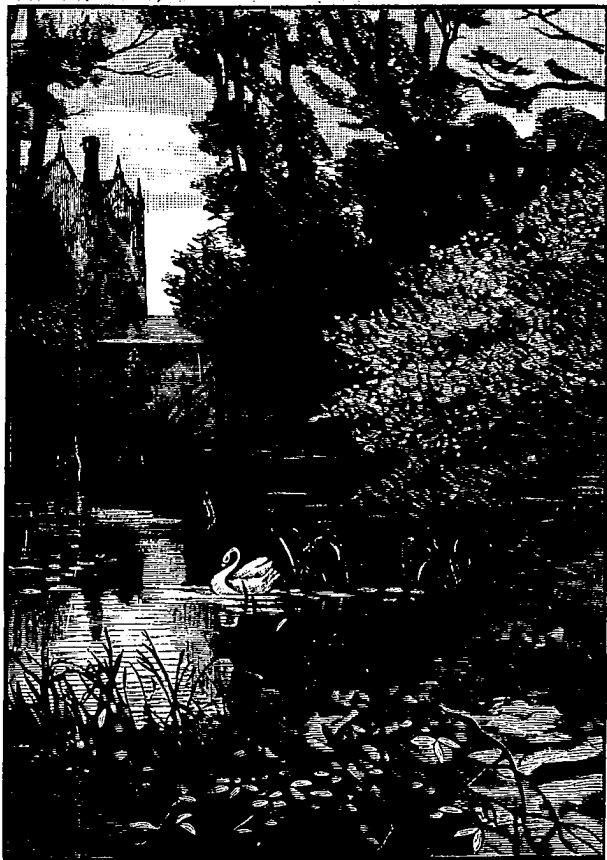
He struck into a path across the fields which he had never traversed before: a circuitous path, that wound by a wood, and then through it: a path that came out finally on Lethington Lake. This lake was not very large, but it was a very picturesque one, made by the widening of the little river over which Harry had so often been ferried. Just as he emerged from the grove, he saw, at some distance, a lady standing up in a small flat-bottom skiff, and propelling it along by a pole. Several swans were following her, as if familiar companions. Her dress was strikingly effective, being of black velvet, fitting close to her figure; and it was a figure of which anyone, even a princess, might have been proud. A broad Rubens-like

hat, with a drooping ostrich-feather, completed her costume. The face was turned from him, and, before he could catch a glimpse of it, the skiff shot around a little promontory and was lost to sight.

"The 'Lady of the Lake,' by Jove!" cried Harry. "She manages a boat, too, as if born to it. What suppleness! What grace in the figure! Is this fairy-land? I've been everywhere—at Newport, Saratoga, the White Sulphur—and yet here, in this out-of-the-way place, I've seen, within a week, two prettier girls than I ever saw before."

He told of his adventure to his friend on his return to the inn, concluding by saying:

"Now, Jack, here's a chance for you. This new 'Lady of the Lake' is obviously staying at the Lethingtons'. You'll be sure to see her, to-night."





wandered off, and were now quite alone. "You know how I love you. All I ask is to be your protector through life. Let me begin now. It is not safe, believe me, for you to go alone."

But she broke from his arm, which attempted to encircle her. "It is safer, at least for you," she said, with a gay laugh, "if you are going to talk nonsense. I know, Mr. Mordant, that you are a rich man's son. What would he think, if he saw you now, with one like me? You need not protest. You will think differently of all this to-morrow."

"Never, never! Neither to-morrow nor any other day. Dear, you do love me; I know you do. You are too truthful to have listened to me, as you have this last week, if you meant to treat me in this way at last."

This was a bold stroke, but it proved the wisest. The girl flushed and hesitated.

"No," she replied, "I am not a heartless coquette. I—I—" But, whatever she was going to say, she

"Pardon me," answered the other: "you're almost as much in love with her, I see, as with the ferryman's niece; and I shan't interfere. Water-nymphs seem to be your fatality. Why not," in a tone of badinage, "get up a sculling-match between the two, and give the golden apple, à-la-Paris, to the one that wins? But to be serious: I'm quite reconciled to stay now; for, with two inamoratas, you're not likely to come to mischief; and, if there's danger at all, it's the 'Lady of the Lake' that, in the long run, is to be feared. I know you, Harry. A girl without money you might marry: but you'd never marry one without culture."

The two young men went early to the ball, but Harry looked in vain for the "Lady of the Lake." Their host had two daughters, both fine girls; but neither had the graceful figure he wished Jack to see. After he had done his duty by dancing two or three sets, he stole out-of-doors, and was not long before he found the ferryman's niece. A delicious half-hour was spent, which Harry would have made longer if his companion had not insisted she must go home. He would have even attended her all the way; but this she would not permit.

"Why not?" he said, at last. They had

checked herself. "Come to the ferry, to-morrow. Come to the house, I mean: see how poor and mean is the life there, and then—then," she faltered, "if you are still of the same mind—"

With the words, she snatched away the hand which he had been holding, plunged into the shrubbery, and disappeared.

"If that is the test, dear," said Harry, as he took his way back to the house, "you will not find me wanting. You are as proud as a duke's daughter. You would have me see how a ferryman's niece lives, before you will believe I am in earnest. Well, at the worst, I can earn my living; and poverty is bliss, compared with a loveless union."

Half an hour later, Mrs. Lethington came up to Harry, as he stood in the doorway, watching the dancers and gnawing his mustache.

"Oh, this will never do," she said. "I forgot you and your friend were strangers. I must introduce you to a partner." She took his arm and led him a few steps to the right. "Agnes," she said, "this is a friend of one of our city friends. Mr. Mordant, Miss Percival: Miss Percival, Mr. Mordant."

For a moment, Harry was dumb. He saw before him "The Lady of the Lake." There was

no mistaking the graceful figure. The elaborate ball-dress was very different from the simple velvet of yesterday; but it displayed, with even greater effect, the lines of the lihe form, the rounded arms, the exquisite bust, the showy shoulders. He bowed low; then, as he raised his eyes and for the first time saw the face, he started so that the crush hat he held fell to the ground. For if ever two faces could be alike in every particular, those of the ferryman's niece and "The Lady of the Lake" were alike. His having to stoop to pick up his hat gave him a moment to recover himself. Turning to Miss Percival to ask for a dance, he saw a look he had often seen before—one of sly mischief.

"Is it possible?" he stammered. "What a witch you are; or rather what a metamorphosis."

"Does that odd remark," was the demure reply, "mean that you don't wish to dance with me? Gentlemen have often called me a sylph, sir, or even sometimes a goddess; but I've never been called a witch before, much less a metamorphosis, whatever that may be."

There was no mistaking her now. This was a touch of the same gayety and sprightliness, the inborn repartee, as he had then thought it, which had so charmed him in the ferryman's niece. In a moment more, a waltz struck up, and Harry, with his arm around her waist, was whirling around the room with "The Lady of the Lake." His partner danced to perfection.

"You will give me your answer to-night?" he whispered, as they floated around, her head

drooping almost on his shoulder. "You know now, don't you, dear, that you're loved for yourself only?"

"Take me into the conservatory," she whispered in reply, "after the waltz. I know a spot there where nobody can find us. I want to tell you how I came to be at the ferry. You mustn't think I masqueraded on purpose."

The story was soon told. This time, when Harry's arm stole about her waist, it was allowed to remain there unopposed; for another waltz was in full progress, and the conservatory was empty, except for themselves. In few words, she told him the old ferryman was a great friend of hers, and how, when he was struck down by rheumatism, she had offered to keep his ferry for him, "for he had nobody to do it," she added, "and I was familiar with boats and boating."

"It was you, then, that I saw yesterday on the lake," said Harry. And he told of his adventure. "There was something about your figure that puzzled me; it seemed familiar, and yet not. It was the exquisitely-fitting velvet dress, in contrast to the one you wore at the ferry."

She laughed a low musical laugh, and, looking up at him, answered with gay raillery:

"That shows how stupid all you men are. A shabby dress makes all the difference—"

"Now, dear, you know that's not fair."

She laughed that low musical laugh again.

"No; it wasn't," she said. "I must beg your pardon for all the deception. I was going to



tell you long ago, as soon, as soon," with a little embarrassment, "well, as soon, as I saw you liked me, only, when you spoke of this ball, and seemed so sorry that I couldn't be present, I had to give way to the fun of the thing, and keep up the deception, just to see if you would come out and speak to me. I pleaded a headache to Mrs. Lethington for being late; said I would take a cup of tea and try to sleep for an hour, before coming down; and that was the hour I gave to you, you foolish fellow, out on the lawn."

There was a sound, after this, suspiciously like a kiss. It was probably not that, for the lady showed no signs of anger, which she would have done, of course, if such a liberty had been taken.

The next day, Harry and his fiancée went out on the lake, at his invitation; he pulling the oars, she steering. It was a beautiful day, and sky and water were in unison with their hearts. After awhile, Harry laid aside the oars and let the boat drift. His companion sat for some time in silence, letting her left hand trail in the water. At last she said, but hesitatingly and still looking down: "I've another confession to make. I'm not Miss Percival at all. That was a name that I asked Mrs. Lethington to introduce me by to you last night. I told her I had a particular reason for it; that I wished to take you by surprise."

"I don't understand."

"Well, to be more explicit, have you never heard of girls being promised in their cradles, by their parents, to boys scarcely old enough to go to school? Have you never imagined that, in such a case, a girl, when she grew up, might shrink from such a compact, naturally wishing to be loved for herself? Now, I know just such a case. It was that of a young lady who

had been for years in Europe, and who was about to be brought home to make the acquaintance of her fiancé. As a sort of reprieve, she persuaded her people to let her come home a couple of months earlier, with some friends whose acquaintance she had made in Paris. She came, and—"

"Great heavens, and you are Lily!" cried Harry. "Well, you are a witch."

"Yes, I am Lily. But I had no idea of meeting you here. I had no idea who you were when I did meet you, till—till—" blushing and more embarrassed than ever, "the second day, when you let slip your name. After that, dear," and this time she glanced up shyly for an instant, "I wished to see if you would love me for myself, which led to all the deception that followed. Do you really, really forgive me?"

For answer, Harry leaned forward, at the imminent peril of upsetting the boat, and, drawing her to him, kissed her again and again.

Then he drew back and contemplated her gravely for a moment.

"What is it?" she said, just the least bit frightened at his change of manner. "You look as solemn as an owl."

"I was thinking how glad the governor would be."

"And mine, too, as for that; though, perhaps," demurely, "he'll not quite like your marrying a ferryman's niece, for that is what you tell me you thought I was."

"I shall not marry the ferryman's niece," he retorted. "I shall put it more romantically. I shall marry 'The Lady of the Lake.'"

And to this day Harry calls his wife, though they have been wedded for years, THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

THE LOST TALISMAN OF MONTEZUMA.

BY A NEW CONTRIBUTOR.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the war with Mexico broke out, I was one of the first to volunteer for service. There is, I suppose, a good deal of the "Berserker" blood yet left in us Americans. The sap of the old Vikings still stirs in our veins.

I had obtained a lieutenantancy; and was in most of the battles of the war. I fought at Chapultepec, and was with Scott when entering the city of Mexico; and I remained, in that city, after the surrender.

During the interval that followed, and before the troops were mustered out, I had a good deal of idle time on my hands. I occupied quarters in an old monastery, and there made the acquaintance of a monk, who was quite an antiquary. One day he said to me:

"You seem interested, my son, in that sheet of picture-writing. It is a curious relic of the ancient Aztecs."

"Curious. How?"

"Tradition says it carries with it the secret of the lost talisman of Montezuma."

"And what was that?"

"A jewel, my son, of priceless value, and of extraordinary powers. My brothers believe that some compact with the Evil One," here he crossed himself, devoutly, "gave to its original possessor, one of the earlier of the ancient kings of this country, authority over man and beast, and even over the genii of the air."

I looked the interest I could not conceal. "At the time of the Conquest," he continued, "the hatred of this horrible superstition of the Aztecs was so intense, that idols and priests, and everything allied to them, were destroyed indiscriminately. Thus, hundreds of rolls of picture-writing, in which their chronicles were kept, were burned, and so all exact knowledge of their history lost. As you know, my son, we are even ignorant who these Aztecs were."

I looked at the venerable relic. Wrinkled and faded as it was, the symbols on it were still quite legible. A wild hope leaped up, in my heart, that, perhaps, I might be able to solve it.

"It seems to me," I said, "that I have heard something of this before. Haven't I read that there was a mighty talisman thrown into the lake, by Montezuma's nephew, Gautemozin, on the last night of his empire?"

"So runs the tale, as generally received, and that the jewel was of priceless value. But there is another story, that has come down by tradition among the few families of pure Aztec blood surviving. It is, or rather was, held by the descendants of Montezuma's daughter, who, you know, first married Gautemozin, and afterwards married one of the Spanish nobles who came out with Cortez. One of these descendants (the last died only about ten years ago,) came here, when I was young, and was very anxious about this bit of picture-writing, though he confessed he had no key to it. His tradition was that the talisman was not thrown into the lake, but was carried off by one or more members of the imperial family. Curious to say, the same tradition has always maintained that this bit of picture-writing contains a narrative of the event."

"What would you say, father, if I should decipher these pictures?"

The monk shook his head incredulously. But after awhile, seeing that I was in earnest, he said:

"*Quien sabe?* Who knows? It would be a wonderful thing; but there is no telling what can be done: who would have believed, when I was a boy, that the ocean would be navigated by steam?"

"I will set to work, to-morrow," I said.

"You are, I have long seen, a learned *savant*. You have heard of Champollion, and even of the Rosetta stone?" He nodded assent. "Well, what has been done for Egyptian hieroglyphics, may yet be done for this Aztec picture-writing. At least, I will try."

"God grant you success. That is," he added, hesitating, "if there is nothing demoniacal in it."

The next day, I went to work, in earnest. But days, weeks, and even months went by, and I was no nearer a solution than at first. I began, finally, to despair. "If I could only find some slightest clue, the most insignificant," I said to myself, one night, as I tossed in my bed, thinking it all over, and unable to sleep in consequence, "*Eureka! yes, Eureka!*" I shouted, suddenly, starting up in bed, "I have it—I have it."

For all at once, as if by an inspiration, the hint I wanted flashed upon me. Of course, I slept no more, that night, but with the first blush of dawn was in the library, and at work.

Days, however, passed, before I made much

progress. But every new discovery was a stepping-stone to some other, and, by and bye, my work proceeded more rapidly. At the end of a month, from that eventful night, I had deciphered the famous roll. It ran thus:

"The record sent to the great emperor, by me,"—here followed what I suppose to be the writer's proper name, which there were no means of deciphering—"second high-priest, intrusted, by his mightiness, with the task of conveying his best-beloved sister, the lady"—another proper name, of course untranslatable—"to a place of safety, and of also conveying to the same place, and making secure, in some secret treasury, the wonderful talisman, long in possession of his family, and on the safe keeping of which the prosperity, if not actual existence, of his royal race depends."

"Pursuant to your instructions, oh! mighty king!" the roll went on to say, "we stole across the lake, in the night-time, and were fortunate enough to land at a point where the enemy—*anathema* be to them forever!—had no sentries posted. From thence, we made our way to the point you had indicated, where preparations had been made for our reception; and for forwarding us, northwards, to the mountains of the sun, whence your illustrious race originally came. The princess bore the anxiety, fatigue and inconveniences of this night journey, with the heroism of her royal race, never uttering a complaint at these hardships, though often lamenting her separation from her royal brother, and from her cousin, his most illustrious spouse. The talisman of his royal race, which you have named after him; I carried in my bosom, so that death only could separate it from me, or prevent my fulfilling your august commands."

Here followed a description of the journey, given with considerable detail, with which, however, I will not weary the reader. I had no difficulty in making out pretty nearly where the journey ended, for the account of the locality, its distance, etc., were not to be mistaken.

"We are here, safe, in the heart of the mountains," the picture-writing went on to say; "with the princess. Great perpendicular cliffs, rising on either side of a narrow valley, permit us to locate our habitations in such a way as not only to defy surprise, but to be almost inaccessible to attack. High up, on the face of one of these cliffs, we have begun to construct houses, a larger one for the princess, a smaller one for myself, still smaller ones for our attendants. These retreats can only be reached by letting persons down from the top of the precipice above, or by ascending from below

with ladders, or by steps cut in the nearly perpendicular wall. Half way up the face of the precipice, there is a narrow ledge, at one spot on which, I have noticed, that, exactly at the third hour of the afternoon, the shadows of two neighboring, dagger-like mountain tops meet. It has seemed to me that this would be a good place to deposit the talisman. I will cause, therefore, a shaft to be sunk there, which can be concealed by a stone, so nicely fitting, that no ordinary observer can detect it. The opening, instead of being round, shall be many-sided and irregular, so that the stone, that covers it, will look like a natural bit of rock. This shaft shall, at a proper depth, lead into a tunnel, which, itself, shall end in a chamber, cut also out of the solid rock, where the precious talisman shall be deposited. For greater security, another approach shall be made to this chamber, which, through a secret tunnel, shall lead to the house of the princess. But the entrance from this point shall also be closed tight, with blocks of stone fitting exactly, so that no eye shall see the talisman evermore, unless the fortunes of your royal race should regain the ascendancy." Here followed an elaborate account of the chamber, and of the corridor in the palace from which it was to be approached. The record then went on: "Should that auspicious event happen, you, or your descendants, have only to send to the spot, at the third hour in the afternoon"—here the day of the month, and the month itself was indicated, both of which I suppress, for obvious reasons—"and the conjunction of the points of the two shadows, the shadows of the two dagger-like peaks near, of which your servant has spoken, will show the mouth of the shaft. The stone may be covered, by that time, with vegetation; but persevere; and the opening will be found. Should, by any accident, our enemy, meantime, discover the shaft, I, or my successors, who will keep jealous guard, will avail ourselves of the tunnel from the house of the princess, to hasten to the secret chamber and rescue the talisman. These careful preparations I have made, so that, if the gods should still keep angry, and your royal race be deprived of your inheritance even for generations, your descendants, when the time for their restoration comes, may be able to recover the talisman, even though I may have been, for many life-times, dumb and dead."

The document then went on to speak of the precautions, which the writer had adopted, in order that the report might reach Gautemozin, even if a prisoner. Whether it did, or not, must remain a secret. My own impression is that it did not. No opportunity, perhaps, occurred to

give it to the unhappy monarch, and the document finally passed into the hands of the conquerors, probably through the capture of its bearer. Some hint of the value must, meantime, have leaked out, for in no other way can I account for the tradition concerning it. But this knowledge was plainly confined, originally, to possessors of Aztec blood, most likely to those only of priestly race, or members of the royal family; and in the course of time, as in the case of the last of the Spanish counts of Montezuma, even they not only lost the art of deciphering the picture-writing, but also the knowledge of the spot, in which the talisman was concealed.

"Let me see," I said to myself, when I had recovered from my first, stunned feeling, after unravelling this mystery, "let me see," and I put my hand to my brow in thought, "the month, mentioned in this report, is the very next month from this, and the day when the two shadows will come into conjunction, is but about five weeks off. What a lucky coincidence! I will get leave of absence; I will procure a faithful guide, and I will find the talisman."

For the enterprise appealed powerfully to my imagination: it was one, I said to myself, worthy of a knight of old.

CHAPTER II.

The first necessity was to procure a guide, familiar with the regions to be traversed; for the mountains, described in the record, were many day's journey distant. The city of Mexico swarmed, at that time, fortunately for me, with scouts and Indian fighters, who had accompanied the American army; and one of these happened to be known to me, from my own experience, as particularly bold and self-reliant.

He was of Scotch descent, an Armstrong, originally from Eastern Tennessee. I sent for him at once, for no time was to be lost. In a few words, I described the region which I proposed visiting, and asked if he had ever heard of it.

He looked at me, with unaffected surprise, and said:

"How did you know of that place, captain?"

It must be remembered, that, thirty years ago, the whole of that country was still unexplored. He went on.

"I thought no white man, but myself, had ever visited it; and I have rarely spoken of it, because, you see, it's sort of uncanny. I passed near it, with some friendly Indians, when taking the shortest out down to the great plains, where the Camanches hunt, or even I would never have heard of it."

"Uncanny?" I said. "I hardly see how that word applies here."

"In this way. The rivers, there, run between perpendicular cliffs, in what the people call *canyons*, gigantic ditches, so to speak, a thousand, two thousand feet deep. Even where rivers don't run, you find these awful clefts. Well, in one place, in the very heart of these mountains, in the midst of a high table-land, we came upon a *canyon*, on whose precipitous sides, half way up, houses were built, two, three, four stories high, houses of solid stone, as good as anything we see here, and quite above what the red-skins could construct."

I drew a deep breath. Here was unexpected confirmation of the record I had deciphered.

"And were they inhabited?" I interposed, eagerly. "What sort of people lived in them?"

"They were utterly deserted, like a city of the dead: uncanny, as I said. I'm sure ghosts haunt them."

"Do you think you could find the place again?"

"Certainly. But—"

He stopped, stroked his chin, and looked at me curiously.

"You are not afraid?" I asked.

"Of the ghosts? No, not exactly," moving, uneasily, on his feet. "After all, I suppose there are no such things. But we Scotchmen, they say, are all superstitious," and he laughed, as if the least bit ashamed of himself.

"Nonsense," I said. "I'll venture the ghosts, if you will."

He hesitated, a moment. "But that's not all. The expedition would be one of great risk," he said. "Ten to one neither of us would come out of it alive."

"What is the risk?"

"Well, you see, we've got to traverse the whole of Mexico, north of this; and the people are anything but friendly. That could be managed, howsoever, for I know three or four good fellows, Mexicans, who could be got to see us safe to the frontier. The real danger comes after."

"And it is that which you fear?"

"I fear nothing, captain," he said, drawing himself up, proudly, "neither man, nor devil, nor even Camanche."

"Will the Camanches block our way?"

The Camanches were, at that time, regarded as even more formidable than they are now.

"Yes! We shall have to cross a great plain, before we reach the mountains, and these Camanches swarm on that plain like devils incarnate."

"But it would not be impossible, altogether impossible, would it, to elude them?"

"Well; put in that way, I can't say it's impossible. Fact is, captain, nothing's impossible, I suppose. You'd want the best of arms, and a rare good horse. I've a horse that would do; but we want another; and I don't know where one can be found. We may have, you see, to make a run of it, some day, and we want a horse that can go from sunrise to sunset."

"I have the very horse."

He shook his head doubtfully.

"They don't raise the horses they used to, captain," he answered. "When I was a boy, and used to go over into old Kentucky, they ran nothing but four mile heats, and that kept a horse up to his work. But now they go in for speed at short distances: Besides, they breed in and in too much; the horses are spindly things; there's no bottom to 'em. We have better horses out on the plains. But yours," with a tone of contempt, "is of course one of those nervous thorough-breds, which all you fellows from the East brag of so."

"Mine is nearly a pure Arabian," I answered. "His sire was brought over, by a friend of mine, who was consul-general to Egypt. I have read, in some traveller's tale, of a mare of the same stock, that carried two men, in chain armor, for a whole day, and distanced her pursuers at that. I believe my horse could do as much. I call him Whirlwind. Come and see him."

The stables were close at hand. Jack followed me, quite incredulous; but the moment he saw my horse, he broke out:

"I give in, captain. I give in. My horse is a good one, as I've said; but he's no circumstance at all to yours. What lungs, what nostrils. See the power in his hind-quarters. How flat his fore-arm. What a shoulder. Ribbed well home. He's a beauty, too: what fire in his eyes; how he arches his neck: yes, captain he'll do."

I will not dwell on the details of our conversation. Of course, I did not tell my secret to Jack. It was not necessary to do that, and he was too much of an in-born gentleman, mere scout as he was, to inquire into it.

The enterprise, after his first hesitation, began to fascinate him, as all such adventures do fascinate young and ardent characters. Its very dangers were seductive.

It was finally settled that we should start, on our expedition, on the third day, the interval being required for necessary preparations; and I went, at once, to head-quarters, to get leave.

The journey through Mexico was marked by no particular events. Once or twice we would have been robbed, if it had not been for the presence of our Mexican guides. On the extreme

outskirts of what they considered civilization, these guides took leave of us, however: nothing would have induced them to venture into the unknown regions beyond. They admitted that they feared the Camanches, more than they did Satan himself.

The serious part of our enterprise, as Jack had foretold, now began. We travelled with the greatest precautions, chiefly in the morning and evening, lying by in the middle of the day, and camping in some protected spot at night. As yet we had seen no Camanches. But one day, as we drew up on the crest of a hill, Jack pointed to a vast plain below us, and said:

"There's the hardest nut we've had to crack yet, captain. If we can cross that plain, and gain the shelter of the mountains yonder, we'll be comparatively safe. But the Camanches, cursed 'em, swarm on that plain, often, as maggots swarm in cheese. You never know when not to look for 'em."

As he spoke, the sun sank behind the western hills, and the whole valley fell into sudden darkness, for in those regions there is little or no twilight. I could just distinguish that the plain was about a two days' march across, and that, except for a few clumps of timber scattered over it, and a line of greenery, a little on one side, that seemed to mark the course of a winding stream, it was absolutely bare. No place of the same extent, that I had ever seen, was so absolutely destitute of cover. The mountains, on the further side, rose steep and apparently inaccessible, for no opening into them could be seen. Their needle-like summits, which, at first, had been rosy with the sunset, gradually grew dark, as I gazed, until the whole landscape sank into shadowy gloom.

"Well," said Jack. "What do you think of it?"

"Please God, we will cross it, to-morrow," I answered, "or at least, the first half of it."

"You are determined? Hadn't you better sleep over it? Better, perhaps, turn back."

I looked, again, to where, in the distance, and undistinguishable only as black silhouettes, rose the needle-shaped summits of the mountains I was seeking. Behind them lay the mysterious region, which concealed, as I had every reason to believe, the mighty talisman of Montezuma.

"I do not need to sleep on it," I answered. "Do you remember Major Graham's words, at Molino del Rey? 'Forward, always forward.' I say the same."

"He died as he said it," answered Jack, "and so may we. But I, like your pluck, captain, and I'll go with you to the death."

Long before the stars, the next morning, had faded in the sky, we were mounted and descending into the plain. Warily we took our course, keeping, wherever possible, to sunken depressions, or behind the screen of timber, so as to conceal, as much as possible, ourselves and our horses, from any wandering Camanches, if such might be roving in the neighborhood.

About ten o'clock, we reached a thick grove, in which we resolved to pause and rest, intending to set forth again at three o'clock. The hours passed anxiously. Ourselves and horses recuperated by rest and food, we started afresh, after first satisfying ourselves that no enemy was in sight.

Four o'clock came, then five, and we were beginning to congratulate ourselves on our good fortune, for the grove of timber, in which we designed to spend the night, was in sight, at only two hours distance, when Jack suddenly halted.

"Hist," he said. "Stoop in your saddle, so as to leave as little to be seen as possible, and look over there to the left. Just ahead of us, I mean. Isn't something moving there?"

I looked, and saw, about three miles off, a dark object on the plains, which I know, immediately, to be a mounted Indian. Simultaneously, I distinguished another, then a third, then a fourth.

"They don't see us, however, as yet," I said, in a whisper.

"As yet, but they soon will," retorted Jack. "These Camanches have the eyes of eagles. There, I told you so."

As he spoke, one of the Indians wheeled his horse suddenly, for they had been going from us, and the moment after, I heard, or fancied I heard, a halloo bore down upon the breeze. The other three Indians wheeled their steeds, as if in answer, and came careering down towards us, apparently whooping and shouting exultingly.

"We can turn and run for the hills behind us," said Jack, "if you say so; and perhaps out-ride the devils; and when we reach the hills, we may be able to hide ourselves in some ravine, and so throw them off the track."

"There are but four of them," I answered. "I see no others in sight."

"All right," retorted Jack, slapping the barrel of his rifle. "This is safe for one of the devils. I depend on you for the other; and then we'll be only two and two."

CHAPTER III.

No one, who has never seen a Camanche ride, when he thinks he is certain of his prey, can realize the sight: the wild speed of his horse, the flutter and whirl of his trappings, the exultation

with which he waves his arm defiantly around his head.

But long before they came within rifle-shot, our foes grew more wary. Instead of sitting erect, and gesticulating, they stooped low on the necks of their horses, showing as little as possible of their bodies. But their speed did not slacken; on the contrary, it increased, if that were possible; and in but little more time than I have taken to write this paragraph, they were close upon us.

"Now, captain," hissed Jack, between his teeth. "We can't afford to wait. I'll take the fellow on the right: you one of the others."

The crack of his rifle followed, and simultaneously I fired also. A burly savage reeled from his saddle. A hurried glance showed me that Jack had brought down his man, likewise.

"Now for warm work," cried Jack. "You keep that fellow on the left in your eye, and I'll look after the other."

There was no time to re-load, for this was before repeating rifles had come into use. The government, when the war broke out, had tried in vain to secure enough Colt's pistols to arm a single regiment, and had failed: even breech-loaders had not been introduced. Jack and I had nothing to defend us now but the old-fashioned pistol, and at closer quarters, our swords.

The Camanches know their advantage, and as they bore down on us, let fly arrow after arrow, with incredible quickness. The only resource left to us, was to dash in upon them. So Jack and I, by a common impulse, put our steeds to the run.

But the Camanches, as we approached, began to circle around and around us, plying their arrows faster than ever. Fleet as our horses were, theirs were no less fleet. Once, twice, the arrows of my particular adversary rung on my saddle-flap; once, one sang close by my ear. At this, I drove my rowels into Whirlwind, up to the heel, and the good beast, answering with a snort, rushed on my foe. The savage tried to twist himself over to the other side of his steed, and to put his horse between me and him, as is the fashion with the Camanche. But it was too late.

The red man is never a match for the white in a hand-to-hand combat, for there the superior weight and muscle of our race tells. After a struggle, that may have lasted for five minutes, or for only half that time, though it seemed an hour, I got a fair chance at my adversary, and rising in the stirrup, so as to give the full force, not only of my muscles, but of the momentum of my descending body to the stroke, I dealt him a blow on the skull, that clove it as if it had been a pippin. He fell from his horse, stone dead.

I now wheeled to see what Jack was doing. I found him engaged in the same kind of struggle; his enemy wheeling and wheeling; and hidden behind his horse, plying Jack incessantly with arrows. There was no time to lose. I dashed, at once, on the savage. He turned, for a moment, at this new attack, and sent an arrow direct at my heart. The missile just grazed my shoulder. Before the Indian could fit another arrow, I was upon him on one side, and Jack on another. A bullet from Jack's pistol went straight into his brain, at the same instant that a blow from my sabre nearly severed his arm. He leaped up into the air, convulsively, and tumbled, with a thud, on the ground, a corpse.

"Neither of us hurt, thank God," I said.

"Neither," said Jack. "We've a bit of hard riding before us yet, however, ere we can reach cover. There must be other red-skins about, and if we don't gain the hills, to-night, we shall certainly hear of them, to-morrow. I think," he continued, "we had better leave on the left, that bit of timber ahead, where we had intended to camp for the night. We must make for the growth on the right, which winds along, as you see, till it almost reaches the hills. If I am not mistaken, it follows the course of a river, and, should we gain it in safety, it would conceal us, till we reached the mountains."

We started, at the word. The day, which had been quite sultry, now began to grow suddenly cool, for a breeze from the north had set in, a bracing, exhilarating breeze, full, I suppose, of what scientists call ozone; and it acted on us like a stimulant. I was even on the point, once or twice, of breaking into snatches of jovial, camp-fire song, but Jack checked me, "for," said he, "the less noise one makes, the better, as a Camanche can hear for miles, though I don't suppose any one is—"

"Stop," I cried, interrupting him. "What is that?"

I pointed ahead, a little to the left, and there, emerging from the very clump of timber, where we had proposed, originally, to spend the night, we saw one, two, three Camanches emerge, in succession, and continuing to count, we finally made out thirty or more.

"We must make for the belt, by the river," said Jack. "We are, luckily, nearer to it, than they are. If we gain it, we may have a chance."

We put spurs to our horses at once, but had hardly gone a hundred yards, when we saw, emerging from the belt of trees, which was our destination, first one, and then another Camanche, until we counted twenty.

Jack drew in his rein. I imitated him.

"Well," he said, coolly, "a fellow must die sometime, I suppose. Look here, captain, how many of those red-skins do you think we can kill, each of us, before they get our scalps?"

To advance was impossible. If we escaped the Indians on our right, we should fall into the hands of those on our left. One, solitary chance remained: it was to retreat, ignominiously to the hills behind us.

"It won't do," said, Jack, shaking his head, as if divining my thought, "for see, there's another gang of these devils, in our rear, coming out of that bit of timber we passed in our morning's ride."

Yes, there they were. We were literally, hemmed in, on every side.

"Captain," said Jack, after a pause, "do you ever pray? I haven't prayed since I was a little shaver at my mother's knee. You see, I was never in a scrummage before, that didn't show some chance of escape. But now, if the Lord don't help us, and that pretty soon, nothing else can."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE NIGHT I DIED.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.



SOME moments elapsed after consciousness had fully returned before I could recall what had happened, though I knew that I was lying on the bed in my own room and recognized the persons present. There were my cousins John and Harry, and a noted surgeon whose face was familiar, though I had no acquaintance with him; and besides these, I saw my old man-servant and another attendant.

Memory recovered its sway. I recollected that at four o'clock I had been driving along a crowded street in a hansom cab. Then followed the recollection of an awful jar—the overturn—then a blank succeeded.

The clock on the mantel struck six; I counted the strokes, tried to speak, but a physical agony as sudden as it was intense struck me dumb and motionless, though through it all I was aware of what went on.

The moments seemed hours; I knew that preparations were making to put me under the influence of an anæsthetic. I remembered that not long before my own physician had warned me against the use of chloroform. I tried to say this, but could not articulate; each attempt was a groan. Then I lay still; I felt neither concern nor any wish to interfere—the matter seemed wholly beyond my control; I was simply submitting to the inevitable.

I knew when the bag was placed to my mouth. I inhaled the first aromatically sweet odor. I opened my eyes and looked about. I saw the doctors and speculated vaguely as to the result of their experiment.

I noticed that a lamp had been brought in. I heard the measures of Chopin's most fanciful nocturne played by a professional musician in the opposite house. The soft white light and the strains of music gradually blended in a delicious harmony which human words are powerless to describe. The figures about the bed slowly receded; the voices began to sound far-off, and

the room to spread gradually out. I felt the bodily pain relax its hold, while the white light and the minor-keyed air swayed to and fro in rhythmic waves that rapidly increased in brightness and sweetness till they held every faculty in their control.

Then a voice, which I recognized as that of the surgeon, though it seemed to come from a great distance, called my name; called again more urgently; but I was past speech, though I knew the chloroform had been removed. I knew, too, that a hurried consultation ensued, that somebody cried out in alarm and grief, that I was raised in someone's arms, and a voice said: "Heart-failure—I am afraid it is over."

I realized that I was dying, but the fact only roused a vague impersonal wonder in my mind; that very wonder became somehow blended with the light and the music, then consciousness was gone.

When I opened my eyes again, I was standing in my dressing-room; the door into the bed-chamber was shut. At first, the fact of my being there did not strike me as peculiar; I was listening for the music. It had ceased, but the air was still vibrant with strange harmonies.

Then I noticed that several persons were present; I singled out Alicia Alderson first. She was on her knees, sobbing with painful violence; her face was hidden in her hands, which were stretched out on a lounge. At a little distance stood my cousins John and Harry, conversing in whispers and now and then regarding Alicia with glances which

betrayed a certain impatience of her uncontrollable agony. Still further off stood my neighbor and friend Mr. Cady; near him was his wife, with whom Alicia was on fairly sisterly terms.

Nobody appeared to take the slightest notice of my presence, and my first sensation was one of simple wonder—my first distinct thought a desire to comfort Alicia. I remembered the hurt and the operation—the fainting-fit. It was odd the doctors had not explained their mistake; perhaps they had left it for me to set matters right.

I crossed the room and laid my hand on Alicia's shoulder, saying quietly:

"Get up, dear! It was all a mistake; I am not hurt."

She only sobbed on, though I called her name several times—even put my arm about her neck. I looked round to ask the others what it meant. Mrs. Cady had approached Alicia and whispered in her ear; she had come up so quickly and stood so close that I had to step back. Then I heard her husband speaking to John.

"Had you any idea there was a predisposition to heart-trouble?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Not the slightest," my cousin replied.

"None of us had," his brother Harry added.

Softly as the words had been spoken, Alicia heard; for, without changing her attitude, she cried sharply:

"Is he really dead? Are you certain?"

"He is dead," John answered, without turning toward her.

She moaned in such anguish that I called desperately:

"Alicia, Alicia, I am not dead! Look up! Can't you see me—don't you hear me?"

But neither Alicia nor the others paid the least attention to my appeal. Mrs. Cady shivered and said to her husband:

"See if there isn't a window open, Charles; there is a cold draught blowing over Miss Alderson."

"She would be better off in her own room," John said, in his hardest voice.

"Oh, I must go in once more—I must see him!" sobbed Alicia. "I can't believe—"

"I am not dead!" I interrupted. "Alicia, darling! can't you see that I am not?"

"Because there is no death!"

It was a new voice that spoke, one which

I had not heard for a long while; but I recognized it. I turned; my half-brother was standing directly in front of me. He had been dead for five years, but he looked so perfectly natural that for an instant it did not strike me as strange to see him.

Then I perceived another relative—a couple of old friends. They were all dead people whom I looked at, and immediately I comprehended that everything I fancied I saw was a dream—part of the delusion caused by the effect of the anæsthetic.

"Wake me!" I called. "It is the chloroform; raise me up—open the window!"

"They cannot hear you," my brother answered. "I hear you—we hear you; but they cannot."

"Will I wake soon?" I asked myself. "Why, it was all a nightmare: the hurt—everything! Oh, I must wake!"

"Come," said my brother; and, as soon as he spoke, I was looking into the bedroom, though the door had not opened. I saw two men entering. I recognized them as an undertaker and his assistant; I had often seen them at funerals. My old butler was with the pair. The three walked toward the bed—a white counterpane covered some object stretched out there.

Then I could only see the dressing-room, the groups collected, and hear Alicia's sobs. The pain of the nightmare grew intense.

"I shall be paralyzed or go crazy if I cannot wake!" I whispered to myself. "Oh, if only I could get rid of you!" I added, addressing the image of my dead brother which my fancy had conjured up.

An expression of lofty pity crossed the face of the image and so sorely exasperated me that I turned my back on it, as I had so often turned my back on that elder brother when, still clothed in the flesh, he irritated me beyond endurance by his airs of superiority.

"The years since I went away appear to have taught you little," came the chill response.

"If, instead of having a nightmare, I were really dead," I exclaimed, "you are the last person likely to come and tell me! There never was a grain of sympathy between us, and we never had a taste in common."

"How much you have to learn," the figure rejoined, with a faint sigh; "your discipline will be even harder than I was led to expect."

"I will wake up!" I groaned. "If I could only stir!"

Then my brother seemed to move slowly down the room, and I seemed to walk beside him.

"Look back," was his chill command.

I obeyed, in spite of a strong effort to resist. I saw the interior of the bed-chamber, though the thick walls and the closed door rose between. I saw the undertaker and his assistant bending over the bed. Then a new burst of grief from Alicia struck my ear; Mrs. Cady was leading her away. I hurried toward her; my brother followed—his hand was on my shoulder.

"Alicia! Alicia!" I moaned.

Close as my brother stood to my side, Alicia and her friend passed directly between us; neither they nor the three men betrayed any recognition of our presence.

Then—how, I cannot tell—I comprehended that all about were no part of a dream: every thing and person was real. I had passed the mysterious portal which men call death! Though still in the world of mortality, I no longer belonged thereto.

"Yes, until you are set free," was my brother's response to that thought.

"Who shall set me free?" I asked, "and when?"

"Only your own will can do it," he replied, "and your own will must decide when."

I looked again at Alicia; she had paused in the doorway—she was looking back; her white face and agonized eyes were fixed full on me. I called her name, but she neither saw nor heard, and passed slowly from the room.

"Yes, I am dead," I said aloud. It was still so hard to credit the fact, that I was forced to repeat it: "Dead! dead!"

"There is no death," my brother added again.

The one thought which filled my mind was that I had not signed my will. The paper lay in a drawer of the cabinet in my library; it had been drawn up months before, but I had been greatly occupied and had allowed myself to put off adding my signature until I should have definitely arranged certain matters mentioned therein.

Now my two cousins would inherit everything, and neither of them had ever liked Alicia. They were hard grasping men, but,

even if they could have brought themselves to offer her a share, I knew she would accept nothing at their hands. A life of drudgery must lie before her—she, the woman I loved, to whom I had meant in case of my death that the bulk of my fortune should be left!

She had been a connection of my mother's first husband—brought up with me; my sister when we were little—my love, my idol, since I reached manhood.

My mental agony grew so great that I could not stop to question or care what new life lay before me; every faculty of my mind was concentrated on the unsigned will and the wrong to Alicia.

I looked at my hand—it was palpable and firm as ever. I seized my brother's wrist in a strong gripe; I struck his shoulder, then my own.

"It is not too late," I said; "oh, it is not too late! You are right, James—there is no death! I am alive, though Alicia could not see or hear me: alive, and I can have justice done her."

I was full of fresh hope; a sense of lightness and freedom made itself felt and quickly became positive ecstasy, now that my mind was so suddenly relieved. I hurried from the room. There was no need for opening doors; I passed where I would—at first, the one convincing proof that I was indeed freed from the physical body.

Yet I was not a spirit—my frame appeared as vigorous as ever; I was dressed in the suit I had worn in the morning. But I could not wait to speculate: I must secure the fortune to Alicia.

I passed down the stairs and crossed the corridor; my dog Don was lying on a mat before the library door.

"Can't you see me either, good old dog?" I asked.

The mastiff sprang up with a strangled bark, then began to whine. His eyes dilated with fear, which he struggled hard to overcome; as I approached, he kept backing off, whining all the while. I spoke to him again and went into the library: I could not waste a moment.

The great room was dimly lighted; but, to my sight, that made no difference—again the sense of exultant freedom seized me.

"If only Alicia were dead too," I said. "But I can watch over her—be near her."

I was standing by the cabinet; the key

was in the lock, but there was no process of turning it. The secret drawer and its contents were visible. I was holding the will; I read it eagerly—every clause was correct. The property for the settlement of which I had waited before signing the paper had been satisfactorily arranged.

I affixed my signature to the document; it was a holograph will, but nobody could break it, I felt certain.

As soon as I had finished my work, I discovered that I was very tired.

"That seems odd," I thought. "I wonder if James and the others are upstairs still? I should think that now one of them might come and give me a little information."

"What do you want to know?" my brother asked. There he stood by the cabinet.

"When did you come in?" I asked.

"As soon as you wanted me," he replied.

"I did not come down with you, because you did not ask me. If you remember, it was never my habit to intrude on anybody; we cannot do it now by each other even so easily as people do that call themselves living and us dead."

"I have signed the will," I said, unable to think steadily of anything else. "I am so glad—so glad—Alicia will have the fortune! Oh, I had not thought! What shall I do without her? Can't she come?"

"When it is time," my brother answered.

"But I want her—"

"This life no more gives us all we want than did the other," he interrupted. "Lie down now and rest—you are tired."

"Very tired," I replied, and lay down on the sofa. "But why should I be tired?"

"Because, though finer and more delicate than your body which lies upstairs, this body of yours is matter also—subject to certain inevitable laws."

"Will I ever be free from it?"

"I do not know; how should I? Wherever I have been, I find what men call matter present, but I find it at the same time what they call spirit."

"I want Alicia," I said, wearily.

"You must rest," rejoined my brother, and he extended his hand.

"Don't touch me," I pleaded; "you know I never could bear to have you! I don't mean to be rude, but your magnetism is as unpleasant to me as ever."

"And yours to me," he replied; "but we

shall be obliged to see a good deal of each other, all the same."

"We need not, I suppose, unless we choose."

"No; but we cannot help but choose, I perceive already—it must be part of the discipline."

"What discipline?"

"That which our wills make for us."

"I wish to go to sleep," I said, impatiently, and at once I slept.

A dreamless slumber it proved for a season, then I became conscious that a new change had taken place: my real entity—the incorporeal essence which mortals term spirit—had freed itself from the astral shape, which lay motionless on the couch as that coarser outward envelope, the material body, lay cold and still in the chamber overhead.

Through immeasurable space we floated, I and those who had joined me with smiling welcomes. Human language cannot describe that which I saw and felt: the ecstatic sense of freedom, the consciousness of powers so new and strange that names for them were yet lacking to me, color multiplied to countless hues that spread in waves of transcendent glory, symphonies which held not mere earthly echoes of supernal harmony, but were the voice of music itself, part of one grand diapason in which the countless universes shared, coursing in rhythmic cycles through the sweep of infinite space.

Into the summer-land, the abode of peace which held ceaseless activity in its repose, as one tint holds every hue of your rainbow in its heart, thither we floated, there we paused.

You can comprehend only human words; time and space are the only symbols which can be understood by you, so that I cannot make you comprehend what existence became when those symbols no longer possessed significance. To render my meaning clear, I must tell you that many years of earthly life would not have been long enough to hold so much in their circle as I lived through during my stay in the summer-land.

Suddenly into the bliss of that sojourn intruded the remembrance of my existence spent on earth; with it rose the thought of Alicia, the overwhelming desire to know that all was going well. No one among my companions had mentioned my past life; no one had questioned, had praised or censured.

No power from without disturbed me; within myself was born the impulse which speedily crystallized into an overmastering determination. I must leave the sunny land—must go back to earth; if I tarried, this beautiful place would quickly become a hell.

Remember that to will is to do! I was back in this lower sphere again. I suffered—suffered almost as much as if I had been compelled to enter the coarse clay envelope itself; but I knew that I had willed to return: I could not depart until I had learned what were to be the consequences of my mortal pilgrimage—the effect on Alicia, on all with whom I had been associated.

A period of unconsciousness ensued. When thought and volition returned, I was lying on the sofa in my library, and the sun was streaming in through the parted curtains. I started up, once more convinced that the events of the past night had been a dream: the accident—my death—all. I looked at my clothing: I had on the dressing-gown I usually wore in my room, and my favorite Turkish slippers.

"I must have fallen asleep here," I said to myself.

I went rapidly over the incidents which I have recorded, till I reached the fall from the cab and the later scene in my bed-room. But, before I could wonder or speculate further, the door opened and my cousins John and Harry entered, accompanied by my lawyer.

"Good-morning all," I called. "I had forgotten I made an appointment with you, Mr. Hendricks."

The three walked up the room without heeding my voice—paused close to me, unconscious of my presence.

"The will must be in the cabinet," said John.

"If there is any will," rejoined Mr. Hendricks. "He often spoke of getting me to draw one up, but he never did."

"Procrastination was always his greatest fault," Harry observed. "I very much doubt our finding a will."

"You are mistaken for once," said I; "the will is there."

No attention was paid to my words. The truth impressed itself anew on me: I no longer belonged to the world of mortals, so far as their consciousness was concerned,

though to call myself dead seemed simply absurd.

I watched Mr. Hendricks open the cabinet, saw him take the will out and hold it up, saw the keen disappointment reflected in the faces of my cousins, and a wave of exultation for Alicia's sake swept over me.

The lawyer unfolded the paper and glanced down it; I looked over his shoulder and saw my own signature clear and distinct.

"A will, but it is not signed," he observed.

I called out; I pointed to the name; I struck the document with my hand. The three remained deaf and blind to my voice and gestures.

"Oh, if James would come again—he might help me!" I exclaimed.

The trio prepared to leave the room; I clutched frantically at Mr. Hendricks's coat—he passed on. I stood in dumb anguish and watched them go.

"I cannot help you," my brother said. I turned; he was standing at my side.

"But the will is signed; I put my name to it the night of my accident. It is there, clear and distinct!"

"To your eyes and mine," he replied, "but not to theirs."

"Alicia—what will become of Alicia?" I moaned.

"She must live according to what men call her destiny. Like everyone in her world or ours, she is bound by the laws of cause and effect."

I hurried away; I went upstairs; I entered the room in which Alicia and her friend Mrs. Cady were seated. I passed into my own bed-room; there was a closed upright box there, the sight of which made me hasten out; there was something repulsive in the sight, for through the woody fibres I could see the white shape it contained.

Down in the library I stood again. No human words can describe my suffering, because the anguish was far beyond the power of human endurance or even of human conception. My brother came; he was joined by other relatives and friends who, like us, had passed beyond the pale of mortality. They were all full of kindness and sympathy, but they could offer no aid.

I was sitting in judgment on myself, and I cowered before my own decision. Deeds, the remembrance of which had always troubled me in the cast-off existence, seemed

of slight consequence now; acts or omissions which had appeared mere trifles assumed a vast importance.

Procrastination had been the fault of mine through which others had most suffered, yet I had always rather encouraged the habit. I perceived now that, through its working, my departure from earthly life must cause untold trouble to many—that the effects of my error might be visited on those yet unborn.

My friends tried to console me; even my brother pleaded earnestly with me to have mercy on myself. He reminded me of many good deeds that I had performed—of the happiness I had brought to scores: all in vain.

"I am condemned," I cried, in anguish.

"No one condemns you," they replied.

"It is your own will alone that makes you suffer! Resist!"

"Have you resisted?" I asked.

"Since we are still here!" they answered, sadly. "It is so hard to get away from earth."

"Are you forced to remain?" I questioned.

"If our wills would let us, we could go," came the unanimous answer.

"Have you never been away?"

"If so, only in what seemed dreams."

"I went last night—I thought so, at least; but I thought, too, that I was gone long—very long. Was that a dream?"

"We cannot tell; we do not know," they answered.

"Take me away from here!" I pleaded.

"I cannot endure more; take me away!"

"Come," they said, and together we set forth.

Through city streets we passed, out along the open country, into the homes of rich and poor, through the market-place, and amid the silence of closed dwellings. All places were tenanted as thickly by those whom men call dead as by those they term the living.

"Why do you stay?" I asked scores of the former; but the answer was always the same in substance:

"We cannot persuade ourselves to go away! We want to set right the wrongs we committed! We cannot bear to desert those who are suffering through the consequences of our acts."

"But you cannot help them?"

"No; we are powerless! Even if in

exceptional cases we can make ourselves seen and heard, the fact seems to change nothing. They are unable to believe in us; they are afraid it is all a delusion."

"And are you always unhappy? Must it last?"

"We shall be happy when our penance ends."

"But who forces this on you?"

"Only our own wills! We see what we merit; we cannot rebel against the verdict which we ourselves pronounce."

"I will to go away," I said. "I have tried my best to remedy the result of my carelessness, for it was nothing more. After all, if what you say is true, those still mortal must live their own lives."

"They must indeed."

"And the discipline, however hard, if used aright, must be of service to them—help to strengthen and elevate their natures?"

"It must," they all agreed.

"Then I shall go."

They looked at each other and looked back at me with smiles of lofty pity. I left them all; their companionship, instead of affording pleasure or comfort, only exasperated me.

I went back to my own house; as I crossed the threshold, there came the thought that I no longer owned any proprietorship therein. I was an intruder—only a ghost—unable to hinder the property which I had possessed from passing into hands I had determined should never hold it! The reflection was very bitter—especially galling to a nature like mine. I had been not only determined, but imperious; though a genuine kindness of heart had kept me from growing tyrannical. I remembered how often I had said:

"Even after I am gone out of this world, I mean to be master! I will leave what is my own so firmly settled that no quibble or skill can change an iota of the command I lay down."

And yet I had procrastinated, and Alicia must suffer!

Again I sought the room in which I was conscious I should find her. I will not go over the details of that visit; I saw not only Alicia, but others who must suffer through my neglect. I struggled so hard to make them see or hear—in vain, in vain!

I hurried from the chamber—from the house. Again I determined to quit the old haunts and return to the summer-land.

I met persons whom I had not seen before; I turned from my old friends to them.

"Do you stay here always?" I inquired.

"Why not?" they rejoined. "We are as gay as butterflies! Come with us and see how we amuse ourselves."

"But are you happy?" I asked.

"Not when we think—nobody is," they answered; "but we have every pleasure. Come and see."

I joined their band; I tried to forget; I could not.

"I must leave you," I said; "I have work to do."

"There will be forever to do it in," they replied.

"I must do it now," I insisted, "and I must make expiation."

"To serve no purpose," they rejoined.

"But go; we cannot keep you. If you will not enjoy yourself, we do not desire your company."

They floated away in the circles of a beautiful dance, and I went most unwillingly, yet deliberately, to my task of self-enforced discipline. Into the cold and darkness I passed, yet even on the threshold I paused.

"It is a waste of existence; it is cruel!" I said.

"We told you so," the dancers called in chorus from the bright distance.

Then I saw my brother and his companions beckon to me, but I shook my head. Into the cold and the dark—I, who hated both—whose craving for light and warmth and beauty had been and must ever be among the strongest needs of my nature!

I was being bound: fettered by bonds stronger than any chains which human ingenuity could devise. The wasted powers and neglected opportunities had become my masters—masters relentless in their cruelty.

I cried aloud; I struggled impotently.

"Come—help me!" I pleaded, alike to my brother and his companions and to the circle of dancers.

"We cannot bear your pain," the dancers called back, and fled precipitately.

"We cannot help you," sighed my brother and his friends. "Your own will forges the fetters; cast them aside."

"I cannot," I moaned, and then they too floated away, looking back on me with pitying eyes till the gathering darkness hid them.

I was alone in a blackness that could be felt. The fetters were tightening—tightening! The mingling of physical pain and mental agony was such as no mortal can picture.

"I will be free!" I groaned. "I will!"

I concentrated strength in one supreme effort; still I felt the bonds tighten. Then a sudden arrow of light pierced the horrible night. A flame as well as light smote my very brain, and, with an awful groan, I plunged down—down—

"He is coming to himself now!"

It was the surgeon who spoke. There I lay on my bed; the clear white light still illumined the room; the piano's voice still rang in through the half-open window. At the foot of the bed, my cousins stood; the doctors were feeling my pulse.

"I am alive!" I exclaimed.

"Very much so," the surgeon answered; "don't try to stir, though—we had trouble enough with your struggling."

"I am alive!" I repeated, in a dazed sort of way; and, as a recollection of the bright part of my vision drifted up, my first sensation was one of regret. "Alive!"

"The operation is a complete success," the surgeon continued. "The leg is set, and the ribs are well incased; all you have to do is to lie still."

"He can't very well do anything else now," said good-natured John, with a laugh; "but I never saw a man make a fiercer fight. What the deuce were you dreaming about?"

I lay back and closed my eyes.

The experience was certainly an odd one, but the oddest points about it were these: there was no Alicia Alderson; I was not engaged; I never in my life procrastinated in a matter of importance, and I never owned a half-brother.

THE OLD STONE MANSION.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON, AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM," "MABEL," "KATE AYLESFORD," &c.

[Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859, by Charles J. Peterson, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CHAPTER I.

"MARGARET," said my mother, feebly.

I glided to her bed-side joyfully, for she had slept so long I had begun to be frightened. I kissed her, arranged the bed-clothes, and softly smoothed her hair.

She looked up at me with a wan smile. I remember that wasted, yet beautiful face as if this had happened but yesterday.

"Does it snow yet?" she said.

I stepped to the window. The storm, which had raged all day and during most of the preceding night, had subsided. The sun was just setting, and the snow-banks, which had drifted, here and there, against the houses on the opposite side of the street, were tinged with a delicate rose-color. A few flakes, blown from the roofs, floated lazily down. The shouts of the boys, playing snow-ball, came to the ear with a muffled sound.

"It is clear, mamma," I answered, "and so pretty. I hear sleigh-bells." And I did not turn my head, but waited, child-like, to see the sleigh, for I was but six years old.

"Thank God!" she answered, with a sigh of relief. "He will surely come now."

Her tone made me look quickly around. How dark and close the room appeared!

"Who will come, mamma?" I asked.

She did not answer. She did not even raise her eyes. She saw something on the bed-quilt apparently, which she tried vainly to pick off.

"Mamma!" I said, taking her hand, with a feeling of vague alarm.

She looked at me like one in a dream. Slowly her wandering faculties seemed to come back.

"You are cold," she said.

I was both cold and hungry. I had eaten nothing all day, nor had there been any fire. I gave one quick glance toward the dead ashes in the stove, to see if they were visible from her pillow; and finding they were not, answered, evasively, with the forethought which care and sorrow had already taught me,

"I feel cold to you, because you have a fever."

"Yes! I must have had fever all day, to have slept as I did. I am very thirsty now. Won't

you take the pitcher and bring me some fresh water from the pump?"

At any other time I would have shrunk from the task. I dreaded the long, dark entry of the strange boarding-house, and the rude boys in the street. But now I rose with alacrity.

"Stay, darling," she said, as I was about to go. I approached the bed-side. She took my head feebly in her hands, drew my face toward her, kissed me, held me a little off, and earnestly regarded me. Her mouth began to quiver: the tears gathered in her eyes.

"Poor little lamb!" she said. Then, lifting her dimmed sight to the ceiling, she murmured, "Father in heaven, protect my orphaned child!"

It took me some time to reach the pump, for I had to break a path through the snow, no easy task for my tender feet. I was a long while, afterward, in filling my pitcher, for the pump worked with difficulty. I saw a big, ill-looking boy standing on the opposite corner, working up a snow-ball vigorously in his hands and eyeing me menacingly. At last the pitcher was filled, and I stooped to raise it. At that moment, whiz! came the snow-ball, as hard as ice, hitting me on the wrist. I fell, and the pitcher, striking the pump, was broken into pieces.

The pain in my wrist was so acute, that I believed it was broken. But rage and indignation was, nevertheless, my first impulse. "Oh! if I was a man," I said to myself, as I struggled up, half smothered with snow. I heard a jeering laugh. But catching sight of the broken pitcher, I remembered it was the only one we had; I thought of my mother's thirst; and at that thought I burst into tears.

"Boo—hoo—hoo," mocked the boy, flinging another snow-ball, which hit me on the cheek.

He stopped suddenly. I heard a heavy blow. I looked toward him. He was struggling up out of a snow-drift, while another lad, about the same size, but of a very different aspect, was standing over him, rolling up his sleeves, as boys do when about to fight. The mute challenge, however, was not accepted. The bully got up, spluttering and cursing; but one look at his antagonist was sufficient; he burst into a

how, as if he was nearly killed, and ran off homeward.

The lad, who had thus interfered in my behalf, gazed after him contemptuously, for an instant, and then crossed over to where I stood. He was dressed neatly, even elegantly, and had an easy, self-possessed manner, very different from that of the boys of the poor suburb where we lived. Two great, dark eyes, eloquent with sympathy, looked down on me as he took my hand, and asked if I was hurt. I stammered something about my wrist being broken. He said, "Oh! I guess not," cheerfully. There was such manliness and courage in his carriage and looks, that I felt reassured immediately.

All at once, however, I remembered the broken pitcher, and began to cry again. He seemed puzzled for a moment, but then brightened up.

"Ah! I see," was all he said. "Wait a minute," and before I knew what he meant, he darted into a shop near by, reappeared immediately with a new pitcher, filled it with two or three quick strokes at the pump, took my hand, and bade me cheerily show him the way home. It was all done in less time than I have taken to narrate it. Before I recovered from my bewilderment, he had touched his cap and disappeared; and I was standing alone, in the cold, narrow, dark hall.

It was only for a moment. Remembering my mother, I hurried up stairs, reaching our room door out of breath.

I had expected to hear my mother ask me the cause of my delay. But she did not. I crossed to the foot of the bed, and poured out a glass of water; yet still she was silent. She did not even look toward me. Though it was now quite dark in the chamber, I could see her white face. It seemed so ghastly, a sudden terror seized me. I dared not speak, nor advance, but stood, with the tumbler-shaking in my hand and the water spilling out. Still that same fixed, strange look! My terror, at last, became too great for silence.

"Mother!" I said; but below my breath.

No answer. The white face, still turned upward, remained immovable as ever.

"Mother!" I shrieked, rushing to her side.

Still not an eyelid moved. She would never hear me again in this world. I realized that she was dead, though I now beheld death for the first time. I threw myself on the body, wildly calling on her to wake up, kissing her, imploring her not to die, frantically uttering shriek on shriek, till I lost all consciousness.

The next few days are almost a blank in my recollection. Looking back at this distance of time, they seem enveloped in a sort of haze. An

unutterable sorrow was almost all that I can recall. Yet I remember, in a dreamy way, waking up to find our fellow lodgers gathered around me; I remember being torn from my mother, and sleeping with a stranger, who nevertheless was very kind to me; I remember, afterward, the next day, I suppose, a big, red-faced, important personage, with huge gold seals that impressed me with a high idea of his importance, chucking me under the chin, saying he had come to take me away, now that my mother was dead, and telling me, when I began to cry at this, that I "mustn't mind it, it was better for her, poor thing, and for me." I recollect, also, the darkened room where the coffin lay; the whispered conversations; the awe on every countenance; and the being lifted to take a last look on that dear face, which now I could hardly recognize, it was so cold and white. I have a faint memory, too, that I shrieked, clung to the coffin, and said I would not leave my mamma; and that afterward, I sobbed myself to sleep, crying, "Mamma, mamma, do come back to me, dear mamma."

Then follows the recollection of a long journey, in which the pompous gentleman accompanied me. At last, one day, we alighted at the door of a splendid mansion, in a great city, a city even larger than the one where I had lived before. A blaze of lights almost blinded me, as we entered the hall. When I recovered from my bewilderment, a richly dressed lady, holding a little girl by the hand, stood before me; and she and my traveling companion were looking at me and talking of me.

"That is your aunt, Margaret," I heard the gentleman say, "and this is your cousin, Georgiana. She's a poor, sickly-looking thing, isn't she?" he added, turning to his wife.

Neither the lady, nor the little girl, offered to kiss me. The latter held by her mother's gown, and when I would have approached, drew back as if either frightened or disgusted. My pride, for even then I had pride, was up in a moment. The coldness of my aunt, the aversion of my cousin, and the contempt of my uncle sunk into my heart, and embittered my life, not only for that evening, but for years afterward. God help your little ones, mother, if ever they become orphans!

That night I was put to bed in a lonely, cheerless room, hastily made ready for me, away up at the top of the house. In my ascent to it, I passed the large, luxurious chamber, which my aunt and uncle occupied, and where my cousin slept in a pretty little crib by their bed-side. An errand called the maid, who had me in charge,

into this apartment for a moment. The soft velvet carpet, the crimson curtains, the wood fire blazing on the hearth, gave it such a warm, home-like air, that the bare, cold floor of my room and the curtainless bed, seemed to me more cheerless even than they were; and the tears fell as I undressed.

"What a funny child it is," I heard one of the maids say to another, with a laugh, for a second servant had joined us, no doubt from curiosity. "She puts her stockings into her shoes, and each shoe in its place, under the chair, just like a little old maid."

"She's had to look out for herself, that's plain," said the other, "and isn't like Miss Georgy down stairs."

"I wonder what beggar's brat it is?"

"Hush!" said the other. "She isn't just that. I've heard all about it, and will tell you, by-and-bye."

My heart was full. It was as much as I could do to keep down the choking sobs. When I had undressed, I was tempted, for a moment, to get into bed, without first kneeling down, as my mother had taught me, to say my prayers, for I felt, instinctively, that the maids would laugh at me. But after a short struggle, I slipped down at the side of the bed and began. One of the servants began to titter. This disturbed me so that I forgot what I had to say. I could only remember one sentence of my old prayer, and that was no longer applicable: "God bless mamma and make her well;" and at this, my little remaining composure gave way, I burst into audible sobbing, and in that state was lifted into bed by the less giddy of the two maids. Here I buried my head in the covers and wept myself to sleep.

Such was my first night in my uncle's house. Such was the beginning of my real orphanage, for, while my mother lived, though I was fatherless, and often cold and hungry, I had some one who I knew loved me.

CHAPTER II.

I LOOK back on the years spent in my uncle's house and wonder how I survived them. I was made to feel, in every way, that I was an alien and incumbrance there. My uncle, perhaps, was less blamable than any of the others; was, indeed, ignorant of many of the indignities put upon me; but even he never loved me. His wife disliked and tyrannized over me, for she was one of those natures who was jealous by organization; and she hated everybody who came into competition, in any way, with Georgiana. As

for my cousin, though she had some good qualities, she was spoiled by indulgence; and was the tool of her mother. There was not an hour in the day that I was not made to feel that I was a dependent. The servants, like most of their class, were time-servers, and insulted and abused me, because they saw no one loved me.

But the world knew nothing of this. My aunt was too prudent to provoke public opinion against her. She was not ignorant of the wisdom of keeping up an appearance of being kind to her husband's orphan niece. I was, therefore, sent to the same school with Georgiana; and if not dressed as elegantly, still dressed suitably. I ate at the family table, and sat in the family pew. All this, considering the treatment I received in the house, exasperated me. I heard my aunt praised for her generosity, when I knew it was a falsehood. My temper became soured; I was regarded as sullen; I thought everybody disliked me. I shunned the companionship even of girls of my own age. I became indifferent to dress, because everybody praised Georgiana and nobody praised me; and went by the name of sloven. I recall the weary, weary days at school, where I heard other girls talking of their happy homes, when I had none. I even see, sometimes, in fancy, a tall, thin, awkward, sandy-haired child, whose fingers were always soiled with ink, and whose hair was often unbrushed, the jest of half her classmates and the pity of the rest: and I look back on that child, oh! with what inexpressible pity; for I think of myself, in those long and dreary years, as of another person entirely.

I was naturally high-spirited. But I came at last to bearing everything, not meekly indeed, but in silence. The worm did not even turn on the heel that crushed it. Yes! sometimes it did. I remember once, that Georgiana had just received a beautiful wax doll, a miracle of mechanism as it seemed to me then; and I ventured to take it up, one day, when she was out of the room. How bitterly I thought that no one had ever given me anything a tithe so beautiful! I was still gazing in wonder on the doll, as I held it in my arms, when my cousin came back. She flew at me in a rage, snatched the doll away, slapped me on the face, and then, though I had not dared to strike her back, burst into a passion of screams, which brought my aunt, the nursery-maid, the house-maid and the footman, all rushing into the room together. Without stopping to inquire about the facts, my aunt seized me, shook me till I was breathless, and threw me toward the maid, whom she directed to put me to bed supperless, which was accordingly done, the maid telling me,

all the while she was undressing me, what a wicked child I was. I brooded over this injustice in silence, but when I saw Georgiana alone, the next day, I could contain myself no longer. For once I rose in rebellion. I called her by every spiteful epithet I could think of, and at last began to beat her. "Oh! if I could only tear off your long ringlets, which your mother and you are so proud of," I said; "if I could only make your face ugly forever." For this, of course, I was punished, and more severely than before.

Another time, Georgiana was jeering me about my poverty, and boasting of her father's riches, and of what a great heiress she would be. I had, somehow, picked up certain items in our mutual family history, and I retorted,

"Poor as I am," I said, "my father, at least, was a clergyman; and yours," he was a large provision merchant, "is only a miserable pork-dealer."

"I'll tell pa that!" she cried, angrily. "I'll tell him you call him names!"

"Do," said I, "and say, that, while his grandfather ran away with the tories, my mother's grandfather was at Bunker Hill."

She was white with rage, for we were both, by this time, old enough to understand our country's history, and unfortunately my taunt was but too true.

"And you may say," I continued, pursuing my triumph, "that while your grandfather made a fortune by smuggling tea, mine was one of those who boarded the ships in Boston harbor and threw the tea overboard."

She could not forgive me for this, and not long after, an opportunity for revenge presented itself.

It was the custom, at the school which we attended together, to devote one afternoon, each week, to criticising what were called compositions. Every scholar was expected to write an essay the night before, which the teacher, after dinner, criticised in presence of the whole class. On one occasion, the theme assigned us was "A Mother's Love." I recall, even at this day, the feelings under which I wrote. Often as the image of my mother had been present to me, never before had it come up so vividly. It was in an agony of emotion, if I may say so, that the words flowed from my pen. When the essay was finished, I remember, I was still so excited, that I clasped my hands, and sobbed, "Oh! mother, dear mother, come and take me away!"

When the class had assembled, the teacher, addressing me, said,

"Did you write this yourself, Margaret Gray?"

"Yes, ma'am," I replied.

She looked at me doubtfully, for a moment, and then began to praise the composition, when Georgiana rose from her seat and interrupted her,

"Please, ma'am," said my cousin, "Margaret didn't write it. I saw her copy it out of some big book in father's library."

I was struck dumb with amazement. I knew that Georgiana was not always truthful, but, as yet, I had only heard her tell falsehoods to escape blame. The deliberate malice of this assertion, and its unblushing coolness, literally confounded me. I stared at her with an amazement, that was mistaken for the consciousness of guilt. The teacher's face grew dark.

"Margaret Gray," she said, severely, "I knew you were sullen, slovenly, and sometimes disobedient; but I did not think you would tell a deliberate lie." She paused an instant, for I turned white with rage. "Yes! I use plain words," she went on, "for, to pretend another's work is your own, is the wickedest of lies. You will stay in for an hour, after the school is dismissed, and wear, all the week, while in school, a white paper pinned on your back, with the word 'liar' printed on it."

I made no reply. I tried, at first, to speak; but could not; I choked. If, at that moment, I could have got at my cousin, with a deadly instrument, I believe I would have killed her.

I was, ever after, a marked girl, in that school. I avoided my classmates, in consequence, more than ever. Before this, I had taken some pride in composition; but now I wrote carelessly on purpose. Often, when I detected Georgiana copying her essays, which had always been her habit, I was tempted to betray her; but I resisted. "No," I said, "I will not be so mean." At last, I grew so unhappy at school, and so defiant and indifferent, that I was dismissed as an example. My aunt, at first, refused to send me to another: she said it was wasting money, and that I might "reap as I had sown;" for she was fond of quoting Scripture. My uncle humphed, twirled his watch-keys, and looked at Georgiana with an expression that said, "Thank heaven *our* child is different." But after awhile, another school was found for me, where I finished my education. It pains me, even yet, to think of those days. Often and often I wished, with bitter tears, that I had never been born. I heard at church, and I read in my Bible, that there was a God, all-powerful and good; but sometimes I did not believe it. "He would not permit such injustice," I said. If it had not been for my mother, I should have

become, literally, an atheist. But I still remembered her early instructions, I still cherished the hope of meeting her in a better world. Sometimes, in dreams, I would even see her: we would walk by cool waters and green meadows; she would smile on me as of old; and I would be supremely happy.

From these dreams I would be aroused by the harsh voice of the servant, calling me to rise; and I would have to get up in the dim, early daylight, and dress on the bare floor, in my fireless room.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I was about sixteen, an event happened, which gave me the first happy hours I had ever spent in my uncle's house. A new daughter was born to the family. The babe came after such a long interval, and when the hope of so great a blessing had ceased for years, that, for a time, it softened and refined all. From the first, the child took a great fancy to me, a fancy which, I need not say, I returned. My heart, so long shut out from love, lavished all its treasures on this little darling. I can never think of her, even now, without happy tears.

She was, in some respects, a precocious child. I remember the wonder with which I recognized the first gleams of intellect in her, when, one day, as I carried her in my arms, she pointed to some flowers on the paper-hangings, and on my stopping, picked out, with instinctive taste, those that were really the most beautiful. From that hour I watched the rapid development of her mind with intense pleasure. Long before she could talk, I began to tell her little stories, which I am sure she comprehended. She felt sick, and it was I that nursed her, day and night, till she recovered. The first moment of extatic happiness I had known from my orphanage, was when she was strong enough, she put her arms around my neck, kissed me, and called me "dear Maggy." She was a demonstrative child at all times. Oh! how sweet was the patter of those tiny feet, as she toddled along the entry, early on summer mornings, to ask to be taken into my bed.

The humanizing influence, which little Rosalie brought with her, did not entirely die out. When she was in her second summer, the family, on her account, was ordered to the sea shore. Annually, ever since I had lived at my uncle's, my aunt and Georgianna had gone out of town in the summer: now to Newport: now to Saratoga; now to Niagara; now to Lake George. But as invariably I had been left at home. But now,

such was the attachment of Rosalie for me, I had to be asked to go.

There was a great contrast, however, between the gay and dashing heiress and myself. Georgianna dressed in the height of the fashion, and, though not beautiful, had a figure that made up stylishly: she was accordingly surrounded by admirers, and imitated and envied by her own sex. I had, long since, grown out of my slovenly days, but I dressed with studious plainness, for I had but a scanty allowance, and as I was passionately fond of books, a good deal went for them. The thought of any one caring for me never suggested itself to me as possible. Generally, I disliked gentlemen, for what had I in common with prosy *bon vivants* like my uncle, or silly dandies such as crowded about Georgianna? My manner, also, in society, was absorbed. Half the time I did not see the dances, nor hear the music. I expressed no surprise, therefore, when I discovered, accidentally, that the retiring young girl, who stole silently to her seat at the table, and to whom a servant, when the dessert came in, brought Mrs. Elliott's child, that she might give it its dainty allowance of ice-cream, and see that it got no more, was governess, and ate at the first table in this capacity. I only smiled to myself. What did I care, I said, what was thought about me?

I used to sit in an arbor, that overlooked the sea, and read by the hour; and this confirmed the general impression as to my position. It was the first time I had ever seen the ocean, an event in any one's life. I never tired of looking at the waves breaking on the beach below; at the white sails in the offing; at the sea-eagles hovering over the surf; or at the fishermen launching their boats. Moonlight especially had a charm inexpressible for me. It filled me with a sense of a different existence. One stormy night, when the spray was blown over the lawn to the very hotel, and when nobody but the bather ventured out, and he only to assure himself that the bathing-houses were not being washed away, I wrapped myself in a thick shawl, and stole forth. Never shall I forget the scene, as the great waves, magnified by the darkness, heaved up out of the gloom, and thundered, whitening, down, shaking the very shore. When I returned, a general sneer went round: and I heard more than one whisper of "wants to be romantic," "I wonder Mrs. Elliott permits it."

One of the most assiduous admirers of Georgianna was an Englishman, handsome, and about thirty, and who had, in great perfection, that air and manner which belongs to good society. His dress was studiously unostentatious, and his sole

jewelry a magnificent cameo ring. He had a low, exquisitely modulated voice, which it was a pleasure to listen to, irrespective of the words he uttered. Few men had equal tact in conversation. He seemed to read character intuitively, and talked accordingly. With Georgiana his conversation was principally of the great people whom he knew abroad. To believe him, he was intimate with Lord John Russell, then prime minister of Great Britain; knew Louis Napoleon, just elected Prince President, intimately; had drunk Johannisberg at Metternich's own table; had been invited to Russia, on some secret, but important business, of Nicholas; and was possessed of the *entree* of every court in Europe. As to the aristocracy of England, from the Dukes of Norfolk and Devonshire down, he pretended to be either personally acquainted with them, or to know from reliable hearsay, all about them. He certainly had a fund of anecdote and gossip, especially respecting the female members of the British nobility, which, if not true, was, at least, amusing. I used to hear him discourse, by the hour, on those themes; for they were favorite ones with Georgiana; and, somehow, he always happened to lounge into the parlor, about noon, when everybody except my cousin and myself was either bathing or sleeping. I soon began to suspect that he was a mere adventurer. Georgiana, however, did not think so. More than once we had a warm discussion regarding him.

"I've no patience with you, Margaret," she said, one day. "How could Mr. Despencer know so much about the British nobility, if he was not one of their set? Then his voice. It is the very ideal of a finished English gentleman's."

"His voice is well modulated, I admit," was my reply. "But I miss the drawl which is said to be conventional in the upper circles of English society."

"Oh! it's only the fops that have that," quickly interposed my cousin.

"Possibly. But to go back to his knowledge of the nobility. He has only to study Burke's Peerage, of which even you have a copy."

Georgiana was quite indignant. She still insisted, however, that I should continue to play propriety for her, by being in the drawing-room, in the mornings, while she flirted with her admirer; and as the bathing hour had arrived, and everybody was going to the beach, she gave a last look in the mirror at her becoming morning dress, for this conversation happened in her room. Then she lounged down stairs, book in hand.

I was provoked, for I wished to look at the

bathers, especially as Rosalie was to go in, with her nurse. I felt my indignation increase, while I listened to the fulsome compliments which her admirer paid to my cousin, particularly when he said that she reminded him of the Lady Clementina Villiers, with whom he had danced at Almacks the preceding winter. I sat nervously knitting my purse, eager to speak my mind; and at last an opportunity offered. The talk fell on manner, which the gentleman pronounced an infallible test of high breeding, "and which," he said, with a bow, "you have in perfection, Miss Elliott."

Georgiana blushed, simpered, and to cover her confusion, turned her fan toward me, saying, "My cousin, here, goes so far as to assert that one can tell, by the accent, what particular nation and province a stranger belongs to."

Her admirer could do nothing less, at this, than turn toward me. He had seen me, I have no doubt, a score of times; but had never condescended to be aware, by any visible sign, that I existed. Now, however, he smiled blandly, saying,

"Ah! Miss, I fear you are a critic. But let us put your penetration to a test. Come now: in what part of England was I born?"

There was a latent sneer under his assumption of deference and admiration; and I answered bluntly,

"Indeed, sir, you are a sphinx. You don't talk like a cockney, for instance. And it can't be said of you, as a pert Oxonian wrote back to his college, the day after he had dined at a great London nabob's, 'we had all the delicacies of the season at table, except the letter *h*.' Nor have you the silly drawl which I've been told the upper classes have affected till it has grown to be a second habit. Nor the Yorkshire accent, for Mr. Elliott's coachman is a Yorkshireman; and he doesn't pronounce as you do. I heard a Gloucestershire man, only the other day; and you're not a Gloucestershire man. In fact," said I, looking at him with a sudden suspicion, called up by this discussion, "you talk precisely like any ordinary New Yorker."

To my surprise, he shot a quick look of inquiry at me, and colored in embarrassment. But it was only for a moment. He forced a laugh and answered gayly,

"Well done. You literary ladies, after all, beat our sex in the delicacy of your compliments. To be an educated American and an educated Englishman, Miss Elliott," he said, bowing to Georgiana, "is to be precisely the same thing."

By one of those strange instincts, which we

sometimes experience, I felt, at that moment, that a third party was listening to this episode. I glanced aside, and sure enough, in a deep arm-chair, half concealed by the lace curtains of the window, there sat a gentleman, who, though apparently absorbed in a book before him, wore such a quiet, significant smile on his face, that I knew he had overheard us. I was annoyed, for I had a suspicion he was silently laughing at the warmth of my retort. Just then he rose from his seat, and his eyes, as he turned away, rested on me for an instant. I felt the blood rush to my brow. He evidently saw my mortification, for he looked immediately toward Georgiana and her admirer; and the latter, now first observing him, turned white as ashes.

Somehow, for the rest of that day, I could not get this stranger out of my mind. I had seen him only for a second; but I knew his every feature, and the air with which he carried himself. A massive head, eagle eyes, a mouth firm as a martyr's, a lofty manner, a powerful frame: intellect, strength and manliness; these were the qualities he impressed me as possessing beyond any other man I had ever seen.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT night there was a "hop." Strange to say, for the first time in my life, I was fastidious about my dress. But as I had only a white muslin and blue barege, to choose from, I was not long in coming to a decision. I selected the former. My hair was dressed *a la Grecque*. Before going down stairs, I went into my cousin's room, to see if I could assist her. She was in high good-humor, having on a new and beautifully fitting dress; and looked at me in unaffected surprise.

"Why, Maggy," she cried, "you are really charming. You always dress so old-maidish, that one doesn't know how pretty you grow. There, child, I declare, I've brought quite a color to your cheeks. Isn't she improved, ma?"

My aunt, stiff in *moire antique*, was drawing her gloves on her fat, pudgy hands. She glanced at me and replied,

"Your cousin will always be odd, Georgy. See how she has dressed her hair."

I knew, from the tone, that my aunt was displeased; perhaps thought my coiffure pretentious; and the pleasure of the evening was spoilt.

Nobody spoke to me for a long while. I sat on a chair, in one corner, and watched the matrons gossiping in groups, and their daughters whirling around in the waltz; all seemed enjoying themselves: I only was unhappy. After

awhile, an elderly, single lady came up, who lived on gossip.

"I don't see Miss Elliott's English beau," she said. "Somebody told me, too, he left this afternoon. Do you know anything about it?"

I had not heard of his departure, and was surprised; for he had expected to remain several weeks longer. But I was so indignant at this impertinent attempt to elicit information regarding Georgiana's affairs, that I suppressed my curiosity to learn what my companion knew, changed the conversation, and directly after rose and left her.

The atmosphere, in the drawing-room, was so heated, that I passed out into the piazza, which running the whole length of the hotel, was used for a public promenade, especially on evenings. It was now almost as crowded as the drawing-room, for a waltz had just been finished, and the dancers were parading, two and two, up and down, gayly chatting and laughing. Having no one to walk with, I stopped at a chair near one of the windows, so that I could look in. I had scarcely taken my seat, when I saw the gentleman, who had overheard our conversation in the morning, cross the room to speak to an acquaintance, who was concealed behind the curtains of the window, outside of which I sat. After mutual expressions of delight and surprise, at meeting each other unexpectedly at this place, the latter said,

"There are some pretty girls here, Talbot. Are you dancing?"

"Dancing," answered my silent critic of the morning, "isn't much in my line; and besides I know nobody as yet."

"Precisely my case. I ran down here, for a day or two, merely because it was near. Generally I go to Newport, as you do. But I understand Gov. Bright, Senator Clare, Col. Howard, and others whom we know are here; and they'll introduce us."

"To tell the truth," replied he, who had been called Talbot, "I don't see any faces here that interest me, except one."

"Who is she?"

"Who she is I can't say. A governess, I believe. But what she is, you can judge for yourself. She is sitting yonder, in that corner. No," he added, in a still lower tone, as he glanced across the room, "she has disappeared."

I was within two feet of the speaker, separated from him only by the wall, and heard every word distinctly. My first impulse was to rise. But to have done this would have attracted his attention. I was compelled, therefore, to remain, though my cheeks tingled.

"She must be beautiful then," laughed his friend, "if, being only a governess, she has attracted you."

"Not what a fashionable woman would call beautiful; but something more original," was the reply. "She is dressed in a simple white robe, with wavy brown hair worn in ringlets from the back of her head; a tall, stately girl, with great, luminous eyes, and a brilliant complexion: a sort of high-souled Diana stepped down from a pedestal."

I was dizzy with a strange delight. I had not only never heard myself called beautiful before, but had never supposed that I was beautiful.

"You are enthusiastic," replied Mr. Talbot's friend, in a tone, half banter, half surprise. "I must see this paragon."

"She's clever, too; clever in the English sense," continued Mr. Talbot. "Whom do you think I found here, when I arrived this morning? That fellow you defended, when I was opposed to you last."

"Not Despencer?"

"Yes! and passing himself off for an Englishman. I happened to overhear him flirting with a stylish-looking heiress, the daughter, I suspect, of the people who employ this governess. He was romancing grandly about my lord this and my lady that, and doing it, I assure you, in a way to impose on nine out of ten, when this young lady, who sat there quietly knitting, but dreadfully annoyed, as I could see, happened to be appealed to." And he briefly narrated what I have already told. "When she had done," he said, "the fellow looked as crest-fallen as he did in the dock. He evidently thought she had heard about him. He caught my eye, afterward; recognized me; and has disappeared, I've no doubt, for I don't see him here to-night. You know he's a coward."

"Cursing you heartily," laughed the other, "for having prevented his trapping an heiress."

"Precisely. But he'd have been found out, even if I hadn't come. This Diana of mine would have seen through him before long. If she has culture, as well as intellect and beauty, what a woman she must be!"

"How old is she?"

"That's the most curious part of all. Apparently about eighteen. Governesses, you know, are generally old and ugly."

"How do you know she's a governess?"

"I heard one of these old tabby-cats say to her daughter, a bony, sharp-nosed caricature of herself, 'see what a ridiculous way that girl, the Elliotts' governess, has her hair dressed in.' The heiress, I believe, is a Miss Elliott."

VOL. XXXV.—3

Fortunately, at this juncture, a crowd of young people, came galloping down the piazza, and availing myself of the noise, I escaped, undetected.

Up to that hour of my life, I had said and believed that a woman ought to be more gratified by praise of her intellect than of her person. I now knew better. For the sweetest words I had ever heard were Mr. Talbot's declaration that I was beautiful. A tumult of strange, but happy feelings possessed me; I could not remain among the crowd; I stole away to my favorite arbor, at the foot of the lawn, overlooking the sea. There I sat, for quite an hour, in a dreamy, delicious revery, only mechanically hearing the surf breaking on the beach beneath me, and the music of the dancers fitfully rising and falling on the land wind.

When I stole back to the drawing-room, I could not, at first, lift my eyes, and my heart fluttered nervously. But the one I dreaded, yet wished to see, was not there, nor did he reappear for the rest of the evening.

The next morning, Georgiana was out of humor: I suppose at the absence of her admirer. I deferred telling her, therefore, as I had intended, what I had overheard about him. I took a long walk on the beach with Rosalie and her nurse, and when the bathing hour arrived, told my pet I would watch her from the bank, as I did not wish, myself, to go in, that day. I was leaving the hotel, for this purpose, when my steps were arrested, in the doorway, by the crowd of laughing and talking young girls and their admirers, who blocked it up for the moment. All at once I observed that Mr. Talbot was near me. One of the young men, who had, I suppose, picked up an acquaintance with him, asked him if he was going to bathe, and on his replying in the negative, the other added, familiarly.

"Not used to it, eh? Or a little afraid? It's rough, to-day, and will take a good bather."

A quiet smile of contempt was the only answer to this ill-bred speech; then the crowd opened, and I pushed through.

The crowd flocked after me. Ladies in wrappers; gentlemen in bathing hats; nurses carrying children in long flannel night-gowns; a grotesque medley; but every one in high good-humor. A group near me was talking of Mr. Talbot's refusal.

"Afraid, that's it," said his interlocutor. "One of your solemn prigs. Shouldn't wonder if he was a parson on a ticket of leave."

At this coarse sally there was a laugh from one or two silly girls. But here another gentleman interposed.

"He's not a parson, I'll bet on that; for he looked into the billiard-room, last night, when I was there; and I asked him to play, for all you fellows were dancing and I was deuced hard run——"

"And he played?"

"Yes! and beat me. Beat me easy. He's somebody, let me tell you; for Senator Clare and the governor both came in, staid till the game was over, and then took him away with them to talk. They wouldn't do that with any of us. I saw them, an hour after, sitting together in the shadow of the pinza. You'd better not be quite so free-and-easy with him, Jones."

"Who can he be?" cried the young ladies.
"Has any one heard his name?"

It is an animated and often amusing sight, when fifty or a hundred persons, of all ages and in every variety of dress, are sporting in the surf: the young shouting with fun and excitement, while the old gravely go through with the bath as if it was the most serious affair in life. One cannot, at first, recognize one's most intimate acquaintances. The tall, willowy belle of the drawing-room has lost the cloud-like amplitude of lace and muslin, which distinguished her the night before, and is converted into a walking mummy, in red and blue woolen Bloomers; an oil-skin cap on her head, no shoes to her feet, her thin person at the mercy of the breeze. The stately dame, lately compressed into that "love of a basque," is revealed in all her huge proportions, and wallows over the sand, toward the surf, in her yellow-brown bathing-dress, quivering all over like calves-foot jelly. Then the cunning look of the babies!

I had taken a book with me, and after watching the scene awhile, began to read, occasionally looking up to see how Rosalie enjoyed the bath. The little thing was in high glee, and far out among the breakers: where, catching sight of me, she clapped her tiny hands and laughed. I smiled back, and wished, for the moment, I had bathed too; for the waves came rolling in quick and crisp, and everybody was wild with delight. To shut out the temptation I turned again to my book.

Suddenly there was a startling cry. I looked up. The bathers were hurrying in shore: the women screaming; the men pale, but silent. With an instinctive fear I searched the crowd for Rosalie and her nurse. They were not to be seen. But I beheld, beyond the breakers, a woman's form, sinking and struggling; I caught the gleam of a child's golden hair; and I heard the cry, "they are drowning," repeated by half

a score of voices, all in one breath. Yet though there were twenty men among the bathers, all were hastening in shore, the boastful Jones leading the terrified pack, and actually treading down helpless females in his way.

I sprang to my feet, and with a wild cry was rushing to the bank, when a strong arm restrained me. It was that of Mr. Talbot.

At any other time his presence would have embarrassed me, but now I thought only of Rosalie.

"Oh! save her," I cried, clasping my hands, "save her!"

He seemed to comprehend everything at once. Throwing off his coat, he leaped down the bank, ran swiftly across the beach, denuding himself of cravat and vest as he went; stopped an instant, on the edge of the surf, to remove his shoes: and plunged in. The next moment he was far out among the breakers.

I watched him breathlessly. He reached the nurse just as she was going down for the last time, caught her, and turned to come in. But at that instant, an enormous billow swept over them; and the whole three went under.

Twenty voices were speaking at once. I heard every one of them, and recognized most of the speakers, though I never took my eyes from the breakers. The nurse was being censured by all. She had been warned, one said, not to go out so far, but had disregarded everybody, and had finally got into a hole, and lost her footing, and with it her presence of mind. A current, which ran just outside the breakers, another added, had swept her, in a moment after, far beyond her depth. Mr. Talbot, one of the gentlemen said, was in this current now, and would never get out of it alive, "for I saw the nurse," he continued, "catch him about the neck as he went down." A by-stander suggested that if a boat could be launched, something might yet be done. But a dozen voices answered that there were no fishermen about, and that nobody else could steer a boat through the surf: besides, the nearest boat was three hundred yards off. The attempt to save the nurse and child, another declared, had been madness from the first. It was the craven Jones, that spoke, for I recognized his voice.

Hours seemed to elapse while these things were being said. But the drowning persons did not reappear. The great wave, which had carried them under, rushed shorewards, and spent itself at the very feet of the fugitives. Another, and another came racing in. Suddenly, in a trough of the sea, far out, I saw an arm dashed upwards; it held aloft a child's form, which I recognized as Rosalie's; and it was followed imme-

diately by Mr. Talbot. His face was full of stern resolution; but he seemed quite exhausted; and he turned eagerly to note how far he was from the shore.

My heart beat wild and fast. Oh! would no one go to their aid? Could he make any headway? Yes! he did. He struck boldly out; he rode that incoming wave triumphantly; he was already twenty feet nearer to the beach.

Alas! for human hope. At that moment, I saw three or four gigantic rollers rushing after him,

their lofty fronts towering higher and higher as they approached. The foremost was close upon him. It paused ominously, piling itself up and up, away into the sky. Suddenly, a streak of foam shot along its crest; a sound like thunder followed, as the tons of water descended; and the brave face disappeared, and with it Rosalie. The succeeding waves rolled swiftly in, and broke over the boiling gulf; and everything swam around me.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE OLD STONE MANSION.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON, AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM," "MABEL," "KATE AYLESFORD," &C.

[Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859, by Charles J. Peterson, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 219.

CHAPTER XIII.

In a few minutes, my cousin came running eagerly up, saying, "Arthur is so glad you are here."

Mr. Despencer followed her, and taking my hand in both of his, as if we had been old friends, greeted me cordially, and concluded by saying,

"It lifts quite a load from my mind to know you will be with Georgiana, for business will call me much away, and this is a lonely place at best."

I will not deny that I felt relieved at these words. Mr. Despencer had not forgotten his old grace of manner. If his welcome had been that of a Paladin to some wandering and wronged princess, it could not have been accompanied by more delicacy in look and manner. I began to think better of him. I wondered less at what I thought Georgiana's infatuation. My answer, doubtless, revealed something of this change in opinion, for my cousin brightened up and gave me a glance full of grateful thanks. Mr. Despencer noticed it also, and continued quite gallantly,

"You might find it dull, for young married people are apt to forget everybody but themselves," and he looked, half laughingly at Georgiana, who was blushing happily—I had not seen her look so happy before, "but fortunately I brought a friend home with me. Mr. Bentley is quite a beau. I should not wonder if he and you got up a flirtation."

I caught an appealing look from Georgiana to her husband. She had not, I saw, informed Mr. Despencer of the reason for my visit. But he comprehended, with ready tact, that he had made a blunder of some kind, and offering me his arm, conducted me down stairs in silence.

Oh! how that chance allusion wrung my heart. It brought back, in full force, the memory of my happiness, now gone forever, and which, for the last half hour, I had temporarily forgot.

Mr. Bentley was handsome and well dressed. But he had a sinister expression, which made me shudder instinctively, as one shudders at

sight of a snake. He seemed to me a something between a jockey and a black-leg, dressed up in Sunday clothes and practicing manners learned of a dancing-master. The elaborate politeness with which he received his introduction to me increased my aversion to him, as elaborate politeness always does, when I dislike people; besides, elaborate politeness is never honest.

The next day rose clear and crisp. After breakfast, Mr. Despencer and his friend departed for the city. The former was so much out of humor that he could barely restrain himself sufficiently to be civil. Georgiana looked as if she had been crying. I surmised that she had told him how unrelenting her father was: and my surmise proved correct, as she informed me, after the meal was over, by way of apology for her husband's ill-temper. She did not tell me how harsh he had been to her, however, and that this was the cause of her swollen eyes.

Mr. Bentley, however, was still offensively polite. He seemed to think that he could make up for his friend's incivility, by excessive attentions to Georgiana and myself, when he only annoyed the first, and exasperated me. For already I was beginning to hate the man. "Has he the impertinence," I said to myself, as I contrasted him with Mr. Talbot, "to think he can make himself agreeable to me?"

When we were left alone, Georgiana excused herself for an hour or two, on the plea of household affairs, but really, I suspect, to have her cry out unobserved. Left to myself, I set forth to examine the mansion. I had been curious, from what I saw of it the night before, to know where Mr. Bentley had slept, for, except the two chambers occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Despencer and myself, and the loft, which the servant had for a dormitory, I was not aware of any apartments in sufficient repair to be used as sleeping-rooms. I found my anticipations correct. The entire half of the house, on the right of the hall, was in a tenantless condition: the shutters rotted off, or hanging loose; the plaster broke; the ceilings fallen in; the floors decayed. I opened the doors, that led into them from the hall, but

did not enter, for they looked dangerous, and smelt damp and fetid. None had any furniture in. I was forced to conclude that Mr. Bentley slept in an out-house.

In my walks I met the old woman, who had waited on us the day before. It seemed as if the advent of Mr. Bentley, with his sinister look, had cast a glamour over the place which affected everything; for this servant, who, had seemed, when I first saw her, only a vulgar-looking cook and maid-of-all-work, now wore a hag-like expression, which made my blood run cold. Toothless, blear-eyed, withered, with long, skinny fingers, and already bent by age, she came upon me so suddenly, as I turned the angle of the house, that I started with a slight, involuntary scream, as if I had seen a witch.

In the course of my further researches, I detected, at the rear of the hall, a massive door leading to the right, and saw that it conducted to a large apartment, the only room, on that side of the house, not plainly a prey to bats and owls. But whether it was in decay or not I failed to discover, for I could not get admittance into it from any point, as it was protected outside by wooden shutters, firmly bolted within, and though a door led into it from the front room, which had been used as a dining hall in the palmy days of the mansion, that, also, was now tightly locked. As I was trying the fastenings of this door, the old servant who seemed to be prowling about watching me, came up and told me the room was nailed up, and had not been used for twenty years.

When I had exhausted the mansion, I went to the out-houses, but still found no place, except a hay-loft, where Mr. Bentley could have slept. The out-houses were as ruinous as the mansion itself, being mostly covered with moss, or overgrown with briars or poison vines, while between the cracks in their gaping walls, green, slimy lizards ran in and out.

Georgiana still kept her room, when I had finished these explorations, and I knocked in vain for admittance. She had a violent sick head-ache, she said, "wouldn't I excuse her till dinner-time?" The dinner would be at five o'clock, "a late dinner to be sure, but Arthur had promised to return by that hour." She thought if she could get a little sleep she would be quite well again. Poor thing! I read it all. She was exhausted by weeping, and fancied that by secluding herself and courting sleep, she could come out at dinner-time, looking freshly, and so deceive me and her husband.

My only chance of avoiding thought was to keep myself occupied. So, when I found that

Georgiana was not coming down, I resolved to go into the city, and inquire where, or how, I could get work. It had to be done at some time; for I was determined not to be dependent. Why not at once?

I hesitated, at first, thinking that Mr. Talbot might, possibly, relent, and that a note might come from him in my absence. But my pride whispered, that, in such an event, my triumph would be the greater if I was away. "Triumph!" I said to myself, immediately after, "ah! he will never write: there will be no triumph for me; he is inflexible." And saying this, I went up stairs for my bonnet. I was torn by conflicting emotions: now angry at him for what I called his tyranny and obstinacy, now more than half convinced that it was I who had been exacting.

I had talked, often and bravely, of what a true woman could do, in spite of the social injustice that beset her path, if left to provide for herself. I tried, as I walked toward the city, to recall all this and to assure myself that the task before me was an easy one. I had only to will it, I said, and all difficulties would disappear. There was nothing menial in working for one's bread: nothing in the mere act of asking for employment, that should call a blush to the face. But when I reached the place where I had determined to make my first application, my heart failed me. It was a picture dealer's, where I hoped to dispose of a few water-color sketches, which I intended to paint. But I walked past the store, two or three times, before I could muster courage to go in. When, at last, I did enter, and nervously told my errand, the rough, curt way in which I was told that "there was no demand for such things now," made every vein tingle with alternate shame and indignation. I had to school myself, for more than an hour, before I could venture on a second attempt elsewhere: and here the answer was the same.

I do not, in writing this autobiography, seek to extenuate myself. I ought not, I know, to have been either angry or ashamed. My reason told me so, even then. But we are flesh and blood, not mathematical machines. We feel the stings of pride, we resent insult, and this the more readily, the more unhappy and friendless we are. To be poor is no crime, but, in the world's eye at least, it is a stigma. To go about, morning after morning, week after week, soliciting employment, when all avenues are filled, often meeting rudeness and nearly always coldness, is no small cross for a woman to bear. Those who have been accustomed to it, all their lives, feel it to be such. It was worse for me. It was the worse for one proud like I was; for pride was

my besetting sin. I do not wonder that impoverished gentlewomen sometimes starve, rather than run this gauntlet. Oh! how I hated the world for its injustice. For, at that period, I charged all my sufferings to its social code.

I hurry over this part of my story. The public has had a surfeit of such sorrows, and is sick of the wrongs of distressed women. And in fact, terrible as this physical suffering is, it is nothing when compared with the mental ones I had to endure. Poverty, even starvation, can be borne better than the loss of love, infinitely better than the sense of one's having done wrong. The pain of the body is nothing to the agony of the soul. Yes! I could have borne all, if I had had within me, an assured consciousness of right-doing. But the more I reflected on my behavior, the more doubtful I felt of its correctness.

To dismiss this part of my story, once for all. After trying various more lucrative avenues to employment, and finding that all were overcrowded, I was compelled to take up with plain needle-work, which I obtained at a House of Industry, an institution established, to provide employment for persons situated like myself. I had put off applying at this place as long as I could, for I knew many of the ladies who managed it; and my pride revolted at being seen soliciting work, by those, who, a month ago, would have been glad to have been my rivals. More than once, when I took back the tasks I had finished, I had to draw down my veil quickly, to prevent being recognized, by former acquaintances, on their way from the managers' room to their carriages. My conduct was foolish, perhaps; but I was human.

It was no perverse wish to be independent that drove me to this sacrifice of pride. I soon reconciled myself to accepting a home from Georgiana, for I saw that I could be useful to her in many ways. But when I had left my uncle's, I had been so completely unprovided with money, that I had not now enough even to renew my wardrobe, though the winter was approaching, when such a renewal would be indispensable. It was necessary, therefore, that I should replenish my purse, however scantily. What I did earn sufficed for my clothing. But it would not have paid my board.

How weary I often was. Sewing, which is such a sedative to many of my sex, was never such to me. It had always, on the contrary, been a task. My eyes ached, my chest pained me, my spirits sank, as I sat, hour after hour, plying my needle. But I never complained, for I did not wish Georgiana to know how much I

suffered, especially as I saw, day by day, her own increasing unhappiness.

I could have endured all, I repeat, if I had been certain, beyond controversy, that I was right. More than once, I saw Mr. Talbot's name mentioned in the newspapers, as having won some important case, or made some eloquent speech. I felt then how I loved him yet! Loved him, I said to myself, in spite of his injustice. But had he, I always added, been unjust? Alas! this doubt was hardest of all to bear. I could have suffered everything, if certain I was a martyr for the truth; but I grew daily less sure of this, and daily, yes, hourly, more miserable.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT I am anticipating. That night, Mr. Despencer returned home, in a comparatively good-humor; and poor Georgiana's spirits rose accordingly. From this time out, her smiles or tears fluctuated with her husband's temper; and alas! for her, he was oftener angry than otherwise. The mild, thorough-bred manner, which had been his only recommendation to me at the sea-shore, was accompanied by a passionate disposition, which he gave full vent to at his own fireside. My blood often boiled at his treatment of my cousin. Why is it that so many men, famed in society for their courtesy, and even chivalry to women, are little better than brutes to their wives?

Mr. Bentley did not visit us again for several days. I was not more pleased with him, at his second appearance, than at his first. There was a coarse, animal look about the mouth, which made you forget even his fine eyes; and they were fine, of that purplish black which is at once so rare and beautiful. He had glittering white teeth, which a perpetual smile constantly exhibited, and which, to me at least, were suggestive of a latent snarl, as if he was a human hyena. Yet he was handsome and well-bred, in the ordinary sense of the term. In a promiscuous assembly of young ladies, at least half would have pronounced him a "love of a man."

"You don't seem to like Mr. Bentley," said Georgiana, the next day when we were alone. "Yet he is said to be very successful with women."

"Who is he?" was my reply.

"Mr. Bentley," said Georgiana.

"I want to know what he is."

"Don't you know?"

"No."

"Arthur says he is a gentleman, who has been unfortunate."

"Do you believe it?" and I looked at her keenly.

"I sometimes think he may be a gambler, or some such thing," she answered, a little embarrassed. "He don't act the real gentleman, now does he, Maggy?"

"I don't think he does."

"He hasn't the manner of Arthur. Few have."

"No. He hasn't Mr. Despencer's manner."

"I sometimes wish Arthur was not so intimate with him. I wonder if they ever play."

"I hope not," I said, for I saw how distressed the idea made her; and to divert her thoughts, I added, "By-the-bye, where does Mr. Bentley sleep, when he comes here?"

Georgiana laughed. I had not heard her laugh so gleefully since she was a child.

"I'm sure I don't know. I'm keeping house, and don't know where my guests sleep—isn't it funny? Arthur told me, I remember now, not to trouble myself about it, for that old Jane would settle it all: and I never did trouble myself." And she laughed again.

The conversation ceased here, but as we sat at the tea-table, that night, Georgiana suddenly looked up, and said to Mr. Despencer,

"Arthur, where does Mr. Bentley sleep, when he comes here?"

Her husband had his cup raised to his lips, in the very act of drinking. He paused, and looked keenly at me, as if divining where the question originated.

"You don't answer me," said Georgiana. "And why do you stare so at Maggy?"

"Excuse me. I had not heard you. I wasn't aware I was staring at anybody. What was it you asked?"

I knew well enough that he had heard her. But Georgiana, completely deceived, repeated the question.

"Oh! in the front garret to be sure," he answered, promptly. "Old Jane has the back one, you know."

But I had been in the front garret, the morning after Mr. Bentley's first visit, and there was not an article of furniture in it, nor did it look as if anybody had slept on the floor. A temporary couch, however, might have been arranged, and removed before I saw the room. Yet I half believed that the whole was an invention of Mr. Despencer's, and that he had paused to get time to think what to say. I was entirely convinced of this, the day after this conversation, for, when I stole up to the garret, drawn thither by noises I had heard after I retired, I found that a bedstead, and a few other articles of chamber fur-

niture, had been arranged there; and as I recognized one or two of the chairs, which I had seen in Georgiana's room, I knew that Mr. Despencer, to blind me, had caused the apartment to be fitted up.

But why should he blind me? Why was there any necessity for a mystery? My thoughts reverted to the closed chamber. But even if that was where Mr. Bentley slept, why should there be any attempt to conceal it? What was the tie between him and Georgiana's husband? It was more than mere friendship, I felt assured. Did they share some dark and terrible secret together, with which, in some way, the closed chamber was connected?

I had resided with Georgiana about four months, when Mr. Despencer said, one evening, that he had to visit a neighboring city, and would be gone for a week.

"I would like to take you, Georgy," he said, addressing his wife, "if Miss Gray will keep house while we're gone."

"Oh! I should be delighted," said my cousin, for, poor child! any kindness from her husband almost set her wild.

I thought immediately of Mr. Bentley, for he had been so marked in his attentions lately, and was so deficient, I believed, in a nice sense of propriety, that I feared he would take advantage of this absence to annoy me more than ever. But I hesitated to mention this, my only objection to the proposed arrangement, for I saw how disappointed Georgiana would be.

"May we count on your keeping house, then?" said Mr. Despencer.

I still hesitated, but an appealing look from Georgiana decided me, and I answered in the affirmative. I never saw a happier being than my cousin was, for the rest of that evening.

The next day, when Mr. Despencer had departed to the city, I frankly told Georgiana, she would oblige me, if Mr. Despencer would hint to his friend, that, during their absence, he should dispense with his visits to the mansion.

"Your husband can do it in a way to avoid offence," I said, in conclusion, "and I don't want to offend any of his friends."

Georgiana promised, but added,

"You don't seem to like Mr. Bentley any better, I'm sorry to see."

"Do you like him better?"

She looked confused. I saw her husband had been talking her over.

"Oh! yes. Arthur assures me, on his honor, that they never play; and Mr. Bentley is really very handsome and very polite."

I made no answer. Georgiana went on.

"I wish, Maggy, you wouldn't be so prejudiced. Arthur says Mr. Bentley is desperately in love with you, and that you really treat him cruelly sometimes."

My first impulse was to resent these words. What right had Mr. Despencer to say I treated his visitor cruelly? What right had he to permit me to be annoyed by attentions I disliked? What right had he to talk over Georgiana? But I reflected how foolish it would be to get angry at my cousin, for it was in her nature to be controlled by her husband. Poor thing! she needed pity more than she deserved anger.

"We will not talk of this, to-day, my dear. But promise to speak to Mr. Despencer about his friend's visits while you are away."

Georgiana saw I had been hurt. She came up and kissed me affectionately.

"Forgive me, Maggy," she said, "Mr. Bentley shan't trouble you."

The next day they left. I watched the carriage, that bore away Georgiana, till it was out of sight: and then re-entered the house, sadly. For my cousin was now the only one left to love me; in all the world I had no other friend; and her departure made me inexpressibly lonely. The old stone mansion, with its decaying out-houses, looked drearier and more desolate than ever.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN I rose, the next morning, the sky was overcast. The bare, wintry landscape, with low, leaden-colored clouds massed above it; the rising wind that moaned and wailed through the pines; the gusts of rain that began to sweep past: all these increased my depression of spirits. There are times, when the aspects of Nature affect us, as if they were a part of ourselves: and this was one of them. Besides, I had always been peculiarly sensitive to such impressions. A mountain stirred my soul with solemn and grand emotions. A quiet Sabbath in the country soothed me with a peace inexpressible. Often, in childhood, as I heard the midnight rain dashing against the casements, I had drawn the bed-clothes over my face, with a shudder, fancying that skeleton fingers were tapping on the window-panes, without, for admittance.

As the day wore on, the storm increased, and my depression of spirits with it. I tried to forget myself with my needle. But this only jaded my nervous system and made me more depressed than ever. I rose and walked the room. The evening was now setting in; the rain rushed down in torrents; the wind had increased to a gale. My footsteps quickened, in sympathy with

the tumult without, as I hurried from side to side of the room.

My fire had died low. Its dim light left deep shadows in the corners of the room, from which I almost expected to see weird faces and forms emerge. I did not dare to stop walking. Once I tried to do it, but my flesh began to creep, and my knees to tremble, as if an invisible presence only waited my stopping to clutch me with its spectral hands. Some of my readers, perhaps, may have felt, at times, like I did. If so, they know the horror of such sensations. To others it would be in vain to describe them. They became so intolerable, at last, that I seized my candle, and sought the company of old Jane, in the kitchen, under the pretence of getting a light.

She was sitting crouching over the fire, with crooked, skinny fingers, occasionally rubbing her hands feebly together. She also had neglected to light her candle, and the lurid glare of the smouldering coals, reflected on her brown and withered face, gave her an aspect more witch-like than ever. I told my errand, half apologetically. She did not rise to get the matches, but pointed silently to where they were. I lit my candle, but still lingered.

"My fire is almost out," I said, at last, putting down my candle, and drawing a stool to the hearth, "and it's not worth while to make it up again to-night, so I will sit here till bed time."

She moved slightly to give me more room, and said something about its being a rainy night. There was a long silence, which I broke, at last, by saying,

"You'll think I am going to ask an odd question. But where did Mr. Bentley sleep, the first night I came here?"

She did not pause an instant, nor even look up, but answered, as she held her fingers to the fire,

"At the tavern, below here: a quarter of a mile, or so, off."

The explanation was so natural, that I gave credit to it immediately, wondering I had never thought of this simple explanation before. Yet I asked myself, at the same time, why Mr. Despencer had attempted to deceive me.

Old Jane looked up at my silence, and seeing surprise in my face, continued,

"The master don't want mistress to know it, and that's why you never heard of it. You see, he didn't expect you, the night he brought Mr. Bentley here for the first time, and Mr. Bentley was to have had your room. But when the master saw how it was, he came and told me to tell the mistress, if she asked, that Mr. Bentley had slept in the garret."

"Which was afterward fitted up for him."

"Yes! But," and she looked at me searchingly, "you seem curious about this matter."

"Somehow I had got the idea that Mr. Bentley slept in the room next to the old dining-hall."

"I'd like to see the man who'd sleep there." She said this in such a low, horror-struck tone, looking around fearfully, that my blood suddenly ran cold.

"Why?" I asked, after a moment, in a voice as hushed.

"Have you never heard?"

"I have heard nothing."

"I knew the mistress had never been told, but I supposed the master might have told you, for you don't seem afraid of anything. But the mistress, she wouldn't live in the house a day, if she knew it—that she wouldn't."

These words, but the manner of the speaker still more, convinced me that some fearful tragedy was associated with this old mansion. I remembered what my instinctive feeling, on first seeing it, had been. With some difficulty I drew from the servant the following recital.

"Thirty years ago, long before you were born, Miss, this house, with acres and acres of land hereabouts, belonged to a family by the name of Lyttleton. The master was a widower, a harsh, miserly man, who saw no company, kept but two servants, and never forgave a debt. His sole delight was to add farm after farm to his property. His father had been a spendthrift, and nearly ruined the family: and this was why the son was so greedy after money, it was said.

"This miser had also a son, but the boy had been away from home, for ten years or more, first at school and then at college. He was about nineteen when he came back to live here. His extravagance was an almost daily cause of quarreling between the old man and himself. Yet he wasn't extravagant for one as rich as he was, if what the neighbors said was true. He wanted to keep a horse; but his father wouldn't let him; and many and many a time high words were heard between them about it. So the young man, as he couldn't be happy at home, took to spending his days away, sometimes in the city, sometimes in places about the country. The town wasn't more than a quarter as big, then, as it is now, and when you got out here, you'd think it was fifty miles away. There was gunning, then times in the woods, and fish to be caught in the creeks; and young Mr. Lyttleton was fond of gunning and fishing both.

"That happened, which often happens. One day, in the spring of the year, while fishing, he

stopped at a little farm house, a few miles farther in the country, to ask for a glass of milk. The farmer's wife was a pleasant spoken woman, and knew who he was; and she asked him into her company parlor, and sent her daughter for the milk. The daughter, they all say, was the prettiest girl about. She came in blushing, and looking down; her lashes were the longest and blackest ever seen; but after she had given him the glass, and while he was drinking, she stole a glance at him, which he caught; and this made her blush more than ever. He used to tell, afterward, that such eyes he had never even dreamed of; and he fell in love at first sight.

"When a young man, only nineteen, is unhappy at home, and finds a house where he is always welcome, and where there is a handsome girl he is in love with, he don't stay away from that house many days in the week. So young Mr. Lyttleton kept a going and going, till the neighborhood began to talk about it, and at last it came to the ears of his father. There was a bigger quarrel than ever, you may be sure. The old man had always meant his son to marry rich, and was furious to hear he had promised himself to a girl, whose father hired the farm he worked. But the son wouldn't give in, no! not an inch. The Lyttletons had always liked to have their own way, father and son, ever since they'd been a family. They were a cruel, desperate set, in the old times, it was said, and had made their money by going a pirating, buccaneering it was called, I believe. The first one, that came to this country, had been captain of a ship that plundered and burned a town, away down in the Indies somewhere, and brought away thousands and thousands of dollars, besides silver and gold vessels from churches; and for doing this last some people said there'd been a curse on the family ever since. He had brought away, too, a Spanish girl, a great heiress in her own country, whom he forced to marry him, thinking to get her money. But her father and mother had been killed, some said by him, when the town was taken; and her relations wouldn't part with a penny to a heretic, as they called him; and the king and Pope both took their parts; and so, though he sent agent after agent, for he didn't dare to go himself, he never got a dollar. This is what people say, but I don't know if it's all true, though nobody denies, I believe, that he treated his wife cruelly, and that she died of a broken-heart. This brought another curse on the family, so the story goes.

"At any rate, they were a bad set enough, gamblers, horse-jockeys, wicked husbands and unnatural fathers, stern, harsh, passionate men,

whom nobody loved, but everybody feared. They always would, as I've said, have their own way. So when the father and son quarreled about this marriage it was terrible. Nobody, for awhile, could be got to live with them, as servants; for each made them the victims of his anger. The oaths, which that parlor heard, where you've been sitting all day, were enough, I've been told, to make devils haunt it till the Day of Judgment."

As she spoke, she glanced fearfully over her shoulder, in the direction of the parlor; and a shiver ran through all my veins. No wonder such an awe and dread had come over me in the gathering twilight in that room.

"How it came to be settled at last, in the way it was, nobody, at first, could tell. But they supposed that father and son had worn each other out, and that so they came to patch up a peace between them. It was agreed that the son should go abroad for two years; that the girl should be sent to school and educated; and that, when he was twenty-one, the son should come back and marry her. One reason, it was thought, why the father gave in, was that this house, and all the original property, was entailed, as they call it, so that the son would get it, at his death, whether or no: and this fact made the son more stubborn too, for he laughed when his father said he'd leave him penniless, and boasted he could live, till then, on the Jews. But the real reason, I reckon, why the father made this bargain, was to get the son out of the way, thinking, that, before two years, he'd forget the girl.

"He did not forget her, however. The Lyttletons always stuck to whatever they undertook. If they hated you, they never let you up. If they went into politics, or took to horse-racing, they held on forever. It had been part of the bargain, that the young man, for the whole of these two years, shouldn't write to the girl. Nor did he. But he heard about her, from time to time, from a friend, and was waiting eagerly for the two years to be up, that he might come back and marry her, when this friend suddenly wrote to him that his father had got the start of him and married the girl himself.

"It seemed, for all this afterward came out, that the girl had never really cared for the young man. She was one of those vain, empty creatures, who can marry anybody, provided they get plenty of finery. Her father and mother thought of nothing but money. They had done all they could to get up a match between her and young Mr. Lyttleton, but when they found he had gone away, they tried as hard to make

a match between the father and her, and succeeded. The old man was not too old to be blind to beauty: no Lyttleton, they say, ever was. Besides, he saw the girl actually courting him, and thought what a revenge he might have on his son. So they were married. It was all done so quick, during one of the girl's vacations, that the friend of young Mr. Lyttleton had no time to warn him.

"The young man came home by the next packet. He was crazy with rage, they say, in Europe, and for most of the way back. Then he settled down into a gloomy silence, which was even more terrible to see. Voyages were longer then than they are now, and for the last half of the voyage he walked the deck, his hands behind him, darkly looking down, and never hearing a word if one spoke to him. The captain, who had heard something of the story, said there was danger in his eye, and was going to warn old Mr. Lyttleton, but was prevented, and so the dreadful tragedy came about."

This long prelude to the denouement, these pictures of the passionate, self-willed, desperate race of Lyttletons, had prepared me for something awful; but when the narrator hinted at parricide, the crime exceeded even my expectations, and I felt my flesh creep with horror, especially as I remembered the room, which had been closed for twenty years, and which I foresaw must have been the scene of the bloody deed, and reflected how near it was. Old Jane seemed to have something of the same feeling, for her voice, which had gradually become raised, in the excitement of the story, sank again to a whisper; and more than once she glanced suspiciously around.

"He was prevented, because, when the ship got to the wharf, it was almost night and raining fast. Young Lyttleton did not wait for the vessel to be made fast, but slipped down the sides by a rope, and was off before he was missed. The captain, as soon as he found himself at leisure, looked around for his passenger, but seeing he was gone, and that the night was stormy, gave himself no more trouble about it, though he would have been too late, even if he had started at once.

"For the young man, the moment he set foot on shore, had hired a coach. He got out to the house about nine o'clock. This is about the time of the night, I suppose, and the storm was just such another. The windows rattled; the rain rushed down on the roof; the pine trees tossed and groaned; and the gale went shrieking away over the fields, I've been told, as if the graveyard, by the old church above here, had been

emptied, and the ghosts were howling by. In the middle of this storm, the son, who had left the carriage at the turn of the road below, reached the door and knocked——”

She stopped suddenly, for distinct and loud, above the tempest, came three or four knocks on the front door. Her brown cheek changed to livid, and, as the knocks were repeated, one, two, three, four, she clutched at my arm, holding it as if in the grip of a vice, and trembling all over.

“Hark!” she said, in a whisper scarcely audible.

The antecedents of her story, the story itself, the breathless crisis at which she had arrived, these had all conspired to make me, at this interruption, start also with a feeling as if supernatural presences were about to enter on the scene. But a moment's reflection brought my courage back to me. Though my blood ran chill with a nameless horror, my reasoning faculties did not desert me. Intellectually, I had always been skeptical as to such visitations. I rose, therefore, resolute to go to the door.

“Don't,” gasped old Jane. It was all she could say. But she held me back, with the clutch of a giantess.

But the blood of the old Norsemen, which ran so blue in my veins, and to which something of my awe of the invisible world may have been attributable, was mounting higher and hotter, with every moment, to face down this peril: mounting higher and hotter because the peril was one, which, at first, my nerves shrank from.

“No,” I said, wrenching myself loose, with a sudden exertion of strength, of which I had not supposed myself capable. “Man, or fiend, I will see what it is.”

I snatched the candle, as I spoke, and rushed out of the kitchen, not giving myself time to reflect. In a moment, I was at the door, had set the candle on a chair, and was unfastening the huge bar which defended the entrance. In another moment, I had flung the door wide open.

What was it, a sheeted form, or the flash of the candle into the gloom, the gibbering of a frightened ghost, or the unearthly cry of the wind, that met my eye, that startled my ears, as the heavy hinges rolled back? Whatever it was, it was gone in an instant. A gust had put out my candle, and I was in the dark, with the rain drifting against my face. Nothing was to be seen, nothing heard without, but the tempest.

I will not pretend to analyze my feelings at this juncture. I felt that no mortal being had knocked. Had I alone heard the sounds, I should have thought that my imagination, worked upon

by old Jane's story, had played me false. But the servant also had heard them. That two persons should be deceived, in the same manner, was hardly possible. Yet my courage did not give way. I felt cold as ice; my knees and hands trembled; but I stood my ground nevertheless, and carefully shut and barred the door, though it was too dark to see. I next recovered my candle. Then, but not till then, I turned to go. Up to this point, in spite of all, I had been calm, and comparatively slow in my movements; for I had been facing the danger. But now I could scarcely restrain myself from running. I felt as if spectral arms might be thrown around me at any moment. I breathed hard and quick. And yet I would not increase my speed, but walked steadily on, groping my way, for what seemed an age, till I reached the welcome door of the kitchen, opened it, and stood within its warm and cheery light.

CHAPTER XVI.

I STAGGERED to my seat, with a face as white as ashes. Old Jane rose up and stood over me, more moved even than myself.

“God help us, she would go,” she said, speaking as if to herself, “she has seen a ghost.”

“No, I have seen no ghost,” I replied, recovering myself. “We deceived ourselves, that is all.”

“Do you mean to say there was nobody at the door?”

“There was nobody. You were telling of young Lyttleton's return, and how he knocked, and our imaginations carried us away. The wind put out my candle. Go on with the story.”

My composure reassured her, and after awhile she resumed her tale, though apparently not without misgivings that we would be again interrupted, for she often glanced fearfully around.

“The room, which has been shut up so long, was the library, and here the father was sitting, poring over some title-deeds, when the son knocked at the door. The bride had gone to bed, wearied out with the loneliness of this old house, on a rainy day in winter. A servant let in her young master, but was so frightened at his sudden return, and at his ghastly look, that she dropped her candle and did not see which way he went. Loud, angry voices in the library soon told, however, where the son had sought and found his father. What passed between them, at first, no one knows. Their voices were heard in furious strife, every other word an oath, and the servants, terror-struck, gathered in the hall; but no one dared to interfere. Then

followed a scuffling, as if a deadly struggle had been joined, and, at this juncture, when the servants were urging each other to enter the room, but no one ventured to take the lead, there was a quick gasp and a heavy fall on the floor, followed, the moment after, by the appearance of the bride, who, frightened by the tumult, and recognizing her first lover's voice in it, had lost all presence of mind and rushed into the very scene she should have avoided. She passed the servants, huddled together at the foot of the stairs, like a flash of sudden lightning, her night-dress streaming wildly, her hair disheveled, her feet unslipped. One of the servants plucked courage and followed her in, foreboding that something awful had taken place, and that worse might happen in consequence of her presence.

"The library door had been open, during all this time, and the light streaming out across the hall. The servant, who followed her, saw her flit past into this gush of light, and then lost sight of her for a moment. When she next beheld her, she had reached the middle of the room, where the library table stood, and was standing, as if frozen to stone by horror. What she saw told its own tale. The father and son, in their rage, had grappled, and the latter, finding the old man too strong for him, had snatched a Turkish dagger, which lay on the table, and which had been used for a paper cutter, and plunged it into his enemy's heart. He had just drawn out the blade, and was holding it up to the light, dripping with blood, a wild, maniacal glare of exultation in his eyes, when his step-mother, once his promised wife, entered. Her sudden cry of horror, as she stopped at the end of the table, aroused his attention; he recognized her, uttered a cry like a wild beast, and sprang upon her. It was all over in a second. Before the servant had got three steps into the room, the body of his victim fell heavily to the floor, and he was standing over it, laughing savagely, and shaking the dagger on high.

"The servant turned and fled, shutting the door behind her, nor was it till aid was had, and the men were all armed, that the library was entered again. For a long time all had been still inside of it. When the door was opened, the two murdered bodies were seen lying where they had fallen. On the other side of the table, with the dagger still sticking in his breast, was the lifeless form of the maniacal son."

Old Jane, at these words, sank into silence, and for some time looked steadily in the fire. I did the same. To have uttered a syllable, to have glanced around the room, would have been impossible, till the feeling of horror, conjured

up by this awful tale, had, in some measure, subsided. At last the narrator resumed, but without removing her eyes from the now fast smouldering coals.

"After the funeral, the library was locked up. The property went to distant heirs, who sold off the farms one by one, and would have sold the mansion also, but nobody would buy it. For, from that hour, people said the house was haunted. On stormy nights in winter, like that when the parricide was committed, noises as of two men engaged in a deadly scuffle, it was whispered about, were heard in the library; lights shone from the tightly shut windows; the shriek of a woman was heard; a white form was seen flitting about; groans and death screams filled the air. So everybody avoided the place. None of the servants would stay, except the one who had followed her mistress into the room, and she was left, at last, in charge of the house. Things went fast to decay. I believe it was never let, though that was often tried, till Mr. Despencer hired it, about six months ago."

As she concluded, she rose and began to cover up the fire. Then she replaced my candle, which had been nearly consumed; lit another for herself, and led the way up stairs. I followed her, casting a furtive glance, as we entered the hall, in the direction of the library door; for I half expected to see the portal fly open and sheeted ghosts appear. When I reached my chamber, I laid my hand on her arm, to detain her for a moment.

"How did you know all this?" I said.

She paused a second, the light of both candles shining on her withered face, and answered, with a look I shall never forget,

"Forty years and more I have lived in this house. Young Mr. Lyttleton was my foster-child. I was the friend who sent him word that his father had married his bride. It was I that followed his step-mother into the library. Do you think that anything else could tempt me to live here? Or that, being all this, I could go away?"

I retired, but not to sleep. My brain was too excited. I lay, listening to the wind and rain, and fancying, at times, that I heard scufflings, death-falls, shrieks, unearthly laughter, every accompaniment of the tragedy of which I had just been told. The delusion frequently was so strong that I sat up in bed to listen more intently. But at last nature gave way, and I sank exhausted into sleep.

I cannot tell how long I was unconscious. I was awake, suddenly, by a loud sound, like the fall of a heavy body, that seemed to come from

the direction of the library. I listened, half incredulous. I even pinched myself to be sure that I was not dreaming. But there was no mistaking the fact of the noise, or rather of a succession of noises, such as angry voices, scufflings, with a heavy, dead fall at the last. A chill of horror, similar to that which had come over me at the front door, ran through my veins. I recalled the strange knocking, and said to myself, with a sensation of almost mortal terror, that modern science was wrong, and that disembodied spirits were permitted, as our forefathers had believed, to haunt the scenes of their earthly misdeeds. But these feelings did not continue long. My natural courage again rallied to my aid, and I resolved trying, as I had earlier in the evening, to solve the mystery. Perhaps, I reflected, I might be able to discover a rational solution for the strange event that happened then, as also for the noises I now heard. If not; if beings of another world really were abroad: how could I come to harm; for I was innocent? I would trust in God: I would go forward.

Thus reassured, I rose and began to dress, first having lit my candle. But my fingers trembled in spite of my reasonings. My heart beat fast, when, having finished my hasty toilet, I took up the candle-stick and approached the door. Just as I turned the key, the strange sounds were heard again, now more distinct than ever. I felt certain I detected two different voices, rising, every now and then, over the noise of the scuffling. I began to be suddenly faint, and was compelled to sit down, for a space, on a chair by the door.

But I soon grew ashamed of my weakness. In spite of the evidence of my senses, the intellectual part of me kept reasserting that there must be a natural solution for this mystery, and that I had only to be bold in order to see these chimeras of my imagination fly away, as the ghost in the grave-yard fades into a white monument on being resolutely approached. So, when I had recovered breath, I rose again, unlocked the door and stepped out.

All was dark and silent in the hall. The rain beat against the casement at the end of the passage, the wind wailed and sobbed around the house, the great pines moaned; but everything, in the direction of the library, was hushed and quiet. I began now to realize how foolish I had been. I must have become so excited, I said to myself, by the narrative of old Jane, that my imagination had persuaded me its fancies were actual sounds. My spirits rose, with this conviction, and I advanced boldly down the staircase.

There was a broad landing, as usual in mansions of a similar character, about one-third of the way down. I had gained this, had turned to descend the last flight, and had gone a few steps, when suddenly the library door swung open on its hinges, and a gush of light streamed out, filling all around with a radiance as vivid as that of noon-day. Looking over my left shoulder, I could see, for a little way, into the library; and I stopped and gazed, for a full minute, as if compelled to do so by some weird power, yet so appalled that the perspiration started out on my forehead in great drops. There was nothing visible, however, except the dazzling effulgence which flooded the room, penetrating into every nook and corner which was visible to my sight. Directly a cold wind began to blow across me, from the haunted room; a wind like that which comes out of a vast charnel-house, that has long been shut up; and it went like an ice-bolt to my heart. My candle was extinguished by it, in an instant. Then followed a low, prolonged wail, that was succeeded by scufflings, angry voices, sounds of blows, and the fall of a human body. I felt as if, the next moment, sheeted spectres would come rushing out. In imagination their death-cold fingers were already upon me. I tried to shriek, but could not. Terror had froze my tongue. In the consciousness of my inability to give the alarm, my senses began to desert me; I knew I was reeling, and clutching mechanically at the balustrade to prevent myself from falling, I made a last desperate effort to scream. Only a stifled mumbling came forth, but it was one pregnant with horror. Instantly the library door banged to, and I was left in darkness, cowering on the steps, and holding fast to the banisters, while I shook as if in a fit.

I can hardly tell how I regained my chamber. Nor do I remember what I did there for the next five or ten minutes. I believe I remained on the bed, where I had sunk, lying in a sort of half-doze. Gradually I began to recover my faculties. I sat up and listened: at first fearfully, then with more courage. At last I summoned resolution sufficient to light my other candle, for the one I taken with me had dropped from my hands when I fell and was left on the stairs. The thought now suggested itself to descend to the library door and knock for admittance. But a cold shuddering ran over me, at the idea, and I glanced around half-expecting to see spectres advance from out of the shadows of the furniture. So I began, noiselessly, to divest myself of my clothing, and leaving my candle burning, I crept silently into bed.

There I lay listening, for more than an hour. Weird sounds of wind and rain came to my straining ears continually; but no unearthly ones, such as I had heard before. At last I fell into a doze, from which I was partially aroused by the parlor clock striking the hour of four or five, I could not tell which. I only remember the silvery sound, ringing through the hushed house, and that, as I tried to count the strokes, I dropped off again into sleep, completely exhausted.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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THE OPERA BOX.

BY CARRY STANLEY.

I.

"STUART! what a magnificent piece of woodland this is! Indeed it is a magnificent country you have altogether! If there was much probability of my remaining the poor devil I am, on five hundred pounds a year, instead of being the next heir of my old bachelor cousin, who loves me about as well as rich old bachelors generally love their next heirs, where there is a title and splendid fortune, I think I should be tempted to patronize republicanism, and become one of the 'sovereigns' of America. But Dunraven Castle and an earldom is too great a temptation—I don't think I can give them up," and Arthur Delange, as he finished speaking, energetically cut off a cluster of oak leaves with the small switch which he carried in his hand.

The two young men sauntered slowly along the grass-grown road which wound its way beneath the arching boughs of the fine old trees, gleams of golden sunlight breaking through the branches here and there, whilst birds sung above them, and squirrels and rabbits fearlessly crossed their path, glancing askance at them with their bright black eyes; and the perfume of the sweet fern and hickory leaves came pleasantly on the morning air.

"Come, curmudgeon! hurry yourself, those birds have to be cooked for our meal yet," said Delange, to an urchin of ten years, who was following them with a bag of game.

"My name ain't curmudgeon, it's Johnny Watson," replied the boy, sullenly, not quickening his pace a whit.

"Take care how you insult 'one of the sovereigns' at large," said Harry Stuart, laughingly; "but who in the name of Venus is this?"

At this moment, emerging from one of the many green alleys which threaded the woods, appeared a lady on horseback, rapidly approaching them. A long, white plume floated over her shoulder, whilst the motion of rider, horse and feather seemed to be one, so graceful and even was it, as she steadily rose and fell in the saddle, whilst with arched neck, glistening eye, and extended feet the horse passed on in a long, even trot.

"She trots splendidly *a la jockey*, by all that's great, and would beat a 'bold dragoon' in the

saddle," said Delange, enthusiastically, as the gentlemen stepped on one side, and stood with heads uncovered till the rider had passed. "Whew! our future President knows her, that's fortunate," continued he, as he saw her halt for a moment by the boy, then pass on again at the same pace as before.

"Pray, Mr. Johnny Watson, can you tell us that lady's name?" said Delange, to the lad who had now approached them.

The child gave a quick, shrewd glance at the speaker, and detecting in his face some anxiety to have his question favorably answered, replied,

"I don't exactly know it."

"But I thought she spoke to you," said Stuart.

"Yes, sir, she comes to see my mother sometimes, sir," answered Johnny, more courteously to Harry, for he had taken a dislike to "the furrin man, with hair, that was always a poking fun at him," as he termed Delange.

"Well, Johnny, do you know her father's name?" again queried Harry.

"Yes, sir, he is Squire Rivers, up in that big house on the hill. He's proper rich."

"Why, you young scamp, I thought you said you didn't know her name," said Delange.

"Neither I didn't know it exactly—it's Miss Emma, or Miss Ellen, or Miss Edith, or some such high flown name," replied the boy, doggedly.

"Well, Johnny, you'll do! What a diplomatist you will make. I hope I'll live to see you Ambassador, or Minister, or whatever you call it in this country," answered Delange, laughingly.

Game seemed to become quite necessary to Arthur Delange's existence, for day after day he took a short cut through the woods to the places where birds were to be found, sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by Stuart; and morning after morning he met Edith Rivers cantering, or trotting along with the same breezy motion. Sometimes she would be humming snatches of a gay tune, sometimes patting her horse's neck, and caressing him in low words; but always, as Delange declared, the most bewitchingly beautiful woman he ever saw.

"Are the birds all killed, Arthur, or didn't you see Miss Rivers yesterday morning, that you are moping about at this time of day?" asked Stuart.

"I haven't seen Miss Rivers these two days, and I'm tired of gunning," answered Delange.

"Because you *haven't* seen Miss Rivers, I suppose," said Harry, laughingly. "Well, there's not much to interest us up here, anyhow; and as our little tavern don't rival 'the Irving,' suppose we put off. Let's go out though, and knock down a partridge or two for the first time, before the sun gets too high."

They had not gone far, when a bird rose. A shot from Delange brought it down immediately. Just then he heard a female voice say sharply,

"Steady, Selim! for shame, sir," and looking behind him he saw Miss Rivers, whose horse was plunging fearfully, with distended nostrils, ears erect and quivering limbs; whilst through it all she unconcernedly kept her seat, with a firmness wonderful even in so practised a horsewoman.

To Delange's astonishment, she was accompanied by a gentleman, who quietly looked on without an offer of assistance, so he quickly sprang to her horse's head and was about to take hold of the bridle, when the lady said,

"Please, do not touch him, sir, I prefer managing him myself," and with a few coaxing words and caresses, she soon brought him under control.

"My gun must have frightened him; I ask your pardon, madam, but I did not know there was any one in the field, but my friend and myself."

"There was no danger to be apprehended: he was only a little gay from not having been used for a few days," was the reply; and Delange inwardly pronounced the smile with which she finished the sentence the most fascinating one he had ever seen.

"My daughter is accustomed to taking care of herself. I never interfere with her rights over Selim," said the gentleman who accompanied Miss Rivers.

The two sportsmen walked beside the equestrians, for some distance, and when they parted it was with the promise to meet that afternoon at Mr. Rivers' house.

Two weeks passed, and Arthur Delange had become as fond of gunning as ever. His afternoons were usually passed in riding over the hills or through the woods by the side of Edith Rivers, and the evening always found him by her work-table, or piano.

Stuart in the meanwhile grumbled somewhat, as he complained that Arthur had appropriated the lady so unceremoniously, that he felt quite *de trop*; and threatened to leave his friend among the hills, if he did not decide upon shortening his visit.

"Propose to her, for mercy's sake, and let's

be off; these abominable fogs will give a fellow the bronchitis, if you don't get away."

"I'm as poor as a rat, or else I would, even at the risk of being rejected on so short an acquaintance. By George, but she's a splendid girl; she's not had all her nature rubbed off her in a ball-room. I never seen so much originality with such polished manners."

"No, I expect not," replied Stuart, dryly, "but I wonder whether that slip of aristocracy, Lady Flora Millwood, has not something to do with your hesitancy. I remember when I was in England that you were her most devoted cavalier. I do not think you will gain much renown, by trying to conquer the hearts of our American ladies."

Arthur Delange's eyes flashed for a moment, but he replied calmly,

"You are mistaken, Stuart. I should never hesitate a moment between Edith Rivers and Lady Flora, I value myself too highly to think that a marriage out of the circle of London exclusive, could disgrace me; but the old earl may hold on these twenty years, and twenty-five hundred dollars does not much more than keep me in gloves and peroussion caps."

Two days of drenching rain confined the gentlemen to the parlor of the little inn; and on the third, when they went to call on Miss Rivers, the servant informed them that she with her father had been suddenly summoned to the city, by the illness of a near relative.

II.

THERE is nothing like having to pass a day or so on board a dirty little Mediterranean steamer to create sociability. As for Lady Clendenning, her pretty Grecian profile was perfectly distorted with yawning. "Robert," said she, suddenly to her husband, after gazing around listless and *ennuied*, "do you know who that splendid girl is over there? She must have come on board at Genoa, as I have not noticed her before; do have compassion on me, and find out!"

Lord Clendenning bowed to his wife, and said it would afford him great pleasure to be acquainted with the lady, so he would go immediately and ask her name, and with much gravity he started off. In a few moments he returned and informed her impatient ladyship that the fair creature was an American lady of the name of Rivers, travelling with her father. Lady Clendenning puzzled her pretty head for a long while, to find an excuse for addressing one who had so much interested her, heartily wishing she would grow sea-sick, if it would only open a door for an introduction; but Miss Rivers sat gazing on the receding shore

with unmoved muscles, and not an increased shade of pallor over the richness of her complexion.

But Fate sometimes quietly steps in and does more for us than our own well-laid plans would accomplish in a month; and so thought Lady Clendenning, as she saw her little daughter of about four years old escape from the nurse's arms, and in running across the floor fell just before Miss Rivers.

Lady Clendenning knew perfectly well that her child was not hurt, but seeing the lady pick it up, she arose with all the semblance of motherly alarm and flew toward her. Miss Rivers was of course properly thanked, little Cora smothered with kisses, and her mother soon established in the full tide of conversation with the beautiful American.

What letters of introduction little children are to be sure.

The acquaintance thus formed soon ripened into intimacy. Lady Clendenning, who was enthusiastic in everything, was told by her husband that she fairly raved about Miss Rivers. They parted and met, and parted and met again at various places on the Continent; and when at last the Clendenning's bid them adieu at Venice to proceed home, it was with the promise that when their tour was over, Edith and her father should visit them in England.

III.

"Now Edith, *ma chère*, look your very best to-night in order to do credit to my taste. Really you are so passably good-looking, that you will be as great a *lionne* as Van Amburgh's," said Lady Clendenning, entering Miss Rivers' dressing-room, as she was putting the finishing stroke to her toilet for the Opera. "Dear me," continued her flighty ladyship, "your taste does more for you than all Paris full of *femme de chambres* would do. Why, there's my French maid, Florette, who would have been half an hour arranging that spray of flowers as gracefully over your *bandeaux*, as you have done it in half a minute. If you have made yourself beautiful to your heart's content we will go; but my dear creature, pray don't fall into the vulgar mistake of thinking that you go to the Opera to listen to the singing; I suppose you do such antiquated things in America, but we only go here to show a last new necklace, or carry on a forbidden flirtation behind the curtains of our boxes."

Lady Clendenning vastly enjoyed the sensation which her beautiful *protégée* created, as soon as she made her appearance in her Opera box. She

was chatting away and flirting her fan with all the graceful coquetry of a Spanish woman, when she suddenly reached over and whispered,

"Edith, look, quick! do you see those three gentlemen standing in the parquette, far back, conversing together?"

Edith followed the direction of her ladyship's eyes and gave a start; a sudden flush mounted over neck and brow, and her breath came more quickly as she thought she recognized as one of the group, Arthur Delange.

"Well," continued Lady Clendenning, "that handsome one is my cousin, the Earl of Dunraven, one of the greatest catches in England. He's somewhat Quixotic, to be sure, and goes tilting against all the windmills of society, but *n'importe*; he has an old title and a splendid fortune, and he's just as much courted as if he was like anybody else."

Edith had scarcely attended to what her friend had been saying. Her eyes were riveted on the gentleman whom she was every moment becoming more and more assured was Arthur Delange; and with a half smile parting her red lips, she could not but wonder at the infatuation of her ladyship in calling the Earl of Dunraven handsome, when he was by. A something, she knew not what, prevented her mentioning having known one of the trio before; but it must be confessed that it was with a glad flutter of the heart, that she hoped to meet him again.

At this moment Lady Clendenning turned around, and nodded carelessly to a couple of ladies, who had just entered her box.

"That's Lady Margaret Talbot, and the one just behind you is her sister, Lady Flora Millwood," whispered she, as the persons under discussion were divesting themselves of their Opera cloaks. "Lady Margaret married a man old enough to be her father, who spends his time in the sentimental occupation of eating, drinking, and being merry over a gouty limb; and as for Lady Flora, she's determined to be Countess of Dunraven; though before my cousin came to his title, she was careful how she threw out the bait, hoping for a better bite, as there was a probability of twenty years between her and the coronet. She's always glad to make use of my box, knowing that Dunraven's fond of me in a cousinly way, and there is a chance of meeting him here."

An introduction now took place to the ladies behind her; and when Edith again turned toward the audience, it was to find herself intently watched by the trio to which Lady Clendenning had called her attention. She looked away; and when again, after a few moments conversation with Lady Flora, her eyes were drawn to the

same place by a kind of fascination, she was sure that she recognized Arthur Delange, and that he half bowed, as if he feared he might be mistaken. The curtain now rose, and she turned her head resolutely toward the stage; but the music occupied her attention much less than she had thought it would. At the end of the first scene she involuntarily looked toward the *parquette* again, to again find the same pair of luminous black eyes watching her.

"Edith," exclaimed Lady Clendenning, "I really believe Dunraven is smitten at last, he has scarcely taken his eyes off you during the whole of that scene. What a good joke it would be, if you were to become Countess of Dunraven! Why, Lady Flora is so near a statue now, that she would turn into a petrification without any trouble, with amazement. She would as soon think he would marry a Camanche squaw. You shall have him though, in spite of her! what a funny idea!" and her ladyship laughed gleefully, and her busy brain was already at work to outmanoeuvre Lady Flora.

"I am very much obliged to you, but I have no ambition to wear a coronet, Lady Clendenning," replied Edith, "so pray don't give yourself any trouble on my account. Keep all your faculties in reserve for that little puss, Cora, she'll need them some day. There is not a title in England that would tempt me, I would not sell myself for so cheap a thing."

"You really look superb when you blaze out in that way," smiled Lady Clendenning. "If Dunraven was only here, I have no doubt that he would insist on taking you at once from the Opera to the altar at St. George's, Hanover Square, provided it was only the canonical hour."

Edith smiled, and again turned her eyes toward the *parquette*, but Arthur Delange was no longer visible. Just then Lady Flora, who, with her sister, had been conversing with some gentlemen behind them during the whole scene, exclaimed,

"You naughty man! come render an account of yourself, it's been an age since I saw you; where have you been?"

"In tortures, ever since I last laid eyes upon your beautiful ladyship," was the reply; "but excuse me for passing you, I must speak to that lady in the front of the box, as I'm sure she is an old acquaintance."

At the well known voice Edith looked around, and blushed as she held out her hand, exclaiming, "Mr. Delange."

"Mr. Delange, indeed," said Lady Clendenning, and her fan, which was always in motion when she carried it, stopped in sheer astonish-

ment, "Mr. Delange, indeed; and pray, if I may be so curious, why did you not say you knew Arthur when I was talking of him?" and she eyed Edith keenly.

"Why I have not heard you mention him to-night! your whole conversation has been of your cousin, the Earl of Dunraven."

A pleased smile beamed upon her from the dark eyes of the gentleman, and Lady Clendenning laughed gaily, as she said,

"What a pity, Arthur, that you are Earl of Dunraven. Edith has been here casting titles and coronets aside to-night with the most superb disdain. In fact she can't bear anybody above an Honorable."

"I never knew your cousin, except as Mr. Delange, and was totally unaware that he even had an 'Honorable' appended to his name," replied Edith.

Lady Flora Millwood looked on in surprise, and wonderingly asked the officer behind her, "where the earl had become acquainted with that girl from the backwoods, whom that eccentric Lady Clendenning had introduced into society?"

"I don't know," was the reply, "but this afternoon when he caught a glimpse of her in the Park; and he left me *sans ceremonie*, and galloped after her as if he had been the wild huntsman."

Dunraven took a seat slightly behind Miss Rivers, shaded by the curtain, and what with snatches of conversation now and then, and a tumult of happy feeling, Edith heard but little of the singing.

"Progressing wonderfully well!" whispered Lady Clendenning in her ear, "I find your rusticity wears off rapidly. Didn't I tell you that fashionable women only come to the Opera to show a new necklace, or flirt behind the curtains?"

IV.

It was seemingly a gay party that met at the breakfast-table, that bright September morning at Beechwood Park, one of Lord Clendenning's country-seats. Lady Clendenning, in her character of hostess, fluttered the pretty peach-blossom colored ribbons of her breakfast-cap gaily over the coffee-cups. Lady Flora did the statuesque and aristocratic at the Earl of Dunraven, who sat and absently played with his teaspoon; Miss Rivers chatted gaily between her father and the Marquis of Hampton, whilst the other guests were arranging the day's shooting, riding, or driving.

We say a seemingly gay breakfast, for Lady Clendenning was puzzled as to the next move she should make with regard to her cousin and

friend; and Lady Flora saw with alarm that the coronet and fine acres of Dunraven Castle were slipping away from her; and the possessor of that title was watching with painful anxiety the game which he thought was being played by Edith; whilst she sat with smiles on her face, and gay repartees on her lips, and she felt sick at heart, to think that the future wife of Arthur Delange, must be taken from the titled beauties of England. As for the rest of the company, most of them were playing at cross purposes too. Some of the gentlemen of the shooting party would fain have staid at home and had a quiet game of billiards, with a lady who perhaps was to be driven out by an exulting rival; there was a lady or two of the riding party, perhaps, who would gladly have given up the exhilarating canter of the saddle horse for a seat in the landeau, or pheton of an heir expectant; and there was a superannuated old lord or so, who was inwardly anathematizing the man who had drawn them into a party for the Abbey, as the damp grass did not agree with them.

"Miss Rivers, will you honor us by taking a seat in my barouche with Lady Clendenning?" asked the old Marquis of Hampton.

Edith assented, and Lady Clendenning cast a triumphant glance at Dunraven. A look of contempt passed over the young earl's face, as he arose from the table and sauntered to the breakfast-room window. Presently he turned and said, "Lady Flora, what do you say to a saddle horse instead of the carriage to the Abbey, it's a fine day?"

Her ladyship gladly availed herself on an invitation, which now came so seldom, and thus the party was made up.

"Really," said Lady Flora to her companion, as they were cantering down one of the broad gravel roads of the Park, slightly behind the rest of the party, "the manœuvring with which that Miss Rivers endeavors to secure the old dotard, the Marquis of Hampton, is disgusting."

"I do not see that Miss Rivers is manœuvring, and even if she was, it would be no more disgusting than that of any other lady," was the reply.

Lady Flora was silent for a moment, for the earl's unintended sarcasm went home.

"Except," replied her ladyship, after a short time, "that he is an imbecile, dissipated old man, whom no one else would marry but herself, and there can be no attraction to her but his title."

"I do not think England so destitute of ambitious women, that he could not find a wife in his own circle if he wanted one," said her companion; but his brow became more moody as he

rode along, and Lady Flora, upon whom a new hope had dawned, when invited by him to ride, again began to despair of ever being the Countess of Dunraven.

The visit to the ruined Abbey passed as such visits usually do. The same amount of champagne, sandwiches and *pate* had been consumed, as is customary, and the party had returned to Beechwood Park, some with more heart-burnings than when they set out, and some with life looking all *colour de rose*.

Lady Clendenning hurried through her toilet, and descended to the drawing-room before the party had assembled for dinner, and, as she expected, found her cousin already there. She took his arm, and commenced carelessly promenading up and down, and, at last, as if accidentally, but in reality so as not to be overheard, she drew him to a window, where they were shielded from observation by the heavy curtains.

"Indeed," said her ladyship, in continuation of their conversation, "it was a terribly stupid ride to me. The marquis was so devoted to Edith, that I felt myself quite *de trop*, and she was so fluttered, that I believe she really forgot I was in existence. I was glad enough to make my escape, when we reached the Abbey; and as his lordship offered her his arm when they alighted, and walked away with her in another direction, I have no doubt it was to make her an offer of his hand, and the place where his heart ought to be."

Her cousin bit his under lip but said nothing.

"Of course she would accept him. She could not fail being dazzled by such a brilliant rank as his," continued Lady Clendenning.

"If she should think of marrying him for a moment, I should consider her irretrievably degraded. He is an old dissipated *roue*, that a Circassian slave would not sell herself to, though there are plenty of English women who would," said the earl, impetuously.

Lady Clendenning stood in consternation. She had "reckoned without her host" entirely. The old Marquis of Hampton, who had stopped at Beechwood Park, for a few days on his way to a friend's, she had persuaded to remain, in order that with his title she might arouse her cousin's jealousy, and she had been tossing Edith about like a shuttle-cock between them; and "here was Dunraven on his high horse tilting at the windmills," as she secretly denominated it, whilst from the bottom of her heart she did not believe Edith Rivers had ever given the Marquis of Hampton a thought. She had intended to outmanœuvre Lady Flora Millwood, and now she had outmanœuvred herself. In her perplexity

she stood clasping and unclasping the bracelets on her arm, inwardly determining to use more skillful generalship in future.

Edith Rivers entered the drawing-room of Beechwood Park, that day just before dinner was announced, more radiantly beautiful than ever. The plainness of her pure white dress, was only relieved by the bows of broad, rich plaid ribbon which ornamented it; whilst her abundance of glossy brown hair was confined at the back with a net-work of gold, which allowed a soft, long ringlet to escape here and there on her neck, or about her ears. There was a flush on her face which Arthur construed into one of triumph, and her bearing was, if possible, more queenly than before. "She'll wear her title well," thought the young man; "and her higher rank, as marchioness, will certainly give her precedence of my Countess of Dunraven."

The party were about separating for the night, when the earl went up to Edith, and holding out his hand, said, "I must bid you adieu, as I shall not see you in the morning. I am unexpectedly obliged to go to Dunraven Castle; but remember that I have a promise of a visit from you and your father with the Clendenings. Emily says that perhaps they will be with me next week. Our party will not be a large one, but the quality will, perhaps, make up for the quantity. The Marquis of Hampton has promised to honor me."

Edith looked up, and imagined there was a half bitter tone in what Dunraven had been saying, but her thoughts were too much pre-occupied to let it dwell long on her mind.

V.

LADY CLENDENNING'S carriage was winding slowly up the long oak avenue to Dunraven Castle, and her ladyship had been silent for quite half an hour. Edith Rivers looked up from a reverie, herself, and asked her if she had taken the vow of La Trappe.

"No," said Lady Clendenning. "But, Edith, are you going to marry the Marquis of Hampton?"

"Of course not," was the decided answer.

Lady Clendenning's face here brightened considerably, when she again asked,

"But he proposed, didn't he?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply.

Her ladyship's clouded brow now became perfectly radiant. Ever since her conversation with her cousin, on the day of the visit to the Abbey, she had been waiting for some intimation from Edith of the marquis' proposal, but her delicacy had forbidden her asking the question directly. But now she was becoming desperate. She must,

if possible, undo all the mischief she had already done by her manœuvring, and it was only by a grand *coup d'état* this could be effected, she alighted at the great hall door in the highest spirits.

"Mr. Rivers and Robert will be along in time for dinner," said she, to her cousin, on entering the drawing-room after changing her dress; "but who's your party, Arthur, except those I see here?"

Lady Flora and her sister, with some dozen others, were named; "but the Marquis of Hampton has not yet arrived. I am sorry on Miss Rivers' account," said the earl.

"It's on Miss Rivers' account that he's not here, I suspect," replied Lady Clendenning, "Edith has refused him," and, giving a sly glance at Arthur, she arose and crossed the room.

To Lady Flora's infinite disgust, the Earl of Dunraven passed by the titled dames of the party, and handed Edith Rivers out to dinner; and she watched with jealous eyes the magnificent hot-house bouquets, which were sent to her dressing-room every day. Arthur resumed his place now by Edith's side as familiarly as he had done in the days of gunning memory, was always by to hand her to the saddle, turn over the leaves of the music-book, or pick up her crochet-needle; but in spite of all Lady Clendenning's manœuvring he never was with her alone.

The riding, driving, boating and fishing parties for the day had been made up. It was too pleasant for any one to remain in the house; but Mr. Rivers had received letters from America, which he wished his daughter to answer immediately, as he was going with Lord Clendenning to look at a model farm in the neighborhood. Edith with inward regret gave up the delightful gallop through the park, which she was to have had with the earl and some others, and slowly betook herself to the library. She looked out sadly at the bright sunshine, and tried not to hear the grating of carriage wheels on the gravel, nor the pawing of horses' hoofs, and the gay voices of the equestrians.

Lady Flora Millwood was handed to her saddle, and the party all mounted except Dunraven, who turning to the groom that held his horse, told him to lead it away, and asked to be excused, as he had some business to attend to that morning.

Edith had been unable to resist the temptation of going to the window, to see the gay cavalcade wind down the hill, and was vainly endeavoring to recognize one figure by the side of Lady Flora, when the library door opened. Supposing it to

be a servant, she did not turn till she heard a step close to her, and some one say,

"Are your letters finished already, Miss Rivers?"

"No, but the day was so fine, and the scenery here is so beautiful, that I could not stay from the window. I think I shall draw my table up and write here. But I thought you were of the riding-party."

"No," answered the earl, "I am very proud of my place, and wanted to take you to the spot we proposed visiting this morning, so I thought I would defer it till you could be along."

There was something in his manner that embarrassed Edith, and she nervously replied, "you have a beautiful place, I never saw a finer one."

"Will you be its mistress, Edith?" was the query, in a low voice, and Arthur took her hand, which, as it was not withdrawn, he had the assurance to pass around her waist; and somehow, at the end of two hours, when the party returned for luncheon, Edith's letters had not been commenced, and Dunraven had attended to no business, except that which did not require the assistance of his steward.

Lady Clendenning was in raptures, taking care

to inform Lady Flora Millwood, the next day, as she was following Edith to the carriage, on their return to Beechwood Park, that Lord Clendenning and herself should not spend their Christmas as usual at Hollywell, for it was a favorite of Arthur's, and she had promised it to him and Edith to pass their honeymoon at.

"I am so glad she refused that old Marquis of Hampton," said she, giving a delighted glance at Lady Flora's disappointed face.

Her ladyship's busy brain is manœuvring still to find something unique as a court dress for Edith, when she shall be presented to her most gracious majesty as Countess of Dunraven, which shall surpass that of the *ci-devant* Lady Flora Millwood, who at the same drawing-room will appear as the Marchioness of Hampton.

"No matter if she does step out before you to dinner in consequence of her rank," says Lady Clendenning, "every leaf on the estate is mortgaged; and as to that court dress, my dear, you shall surpass her as far as Cinderella did her sisters after being arrayed by the fairy."

"Take care, Edith," says the earl, laughingly, "or Emily will ruin your dress, as she nearly did your happiness—by manœuvring."

THE PASSWAY OF PERIL.

BY MRS. M. SHEFFEY PETERS.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18.

CHAPTER V.

WE must not betray the lover-like secrets whispered for the next two hours. At the end of that time, Claymour exclaimed suddenly:

"How cold it has grown! Ah, a storm is coming up. We may have snow or sleet yet."

"Mercy help us!" cried Lottie; "that will be dreadful."

"Oh, no," he said, "if we could but reach our camp before those clouds break; and there may be time for that, if Kate will only hurry up. I wonder she has not already sounded the whistle."

"Dear me," cried Lottie, "how careless of me: I've got Kate's whistle. No doubt she has been wanting it."

"Give it to me. I will sound the recall," said Paxton; and he sounded a shrill blast—several, indeed.

"I see they have taken the alarm," he cried. "Tarleton has set off on his mule, the 'captain' is running wildly about, evidently calling the party together, and yonder, across the field, come three or four of the girls, running—positively running at their best speed. They must have been really alarmed by the approaching storm."

"I am not tall enough to see them, over that next group of Lashorns," lamented Lottie, trying to tiptoe, but careening against Claymour, who felt nothing averse, truth to tell, to it; and all the more for her frantic blushes. The contretemps delayed the descent awhile, as it naturally reminded the newly-betrothed lover that he would probably enjoy but few more such chances for stolen interviews with his lady-love: so he made the most of this one; and, by the time they had descended and reached the place of rendezvous, most of the party had mounted, and were going down the mountain at a brisk pace.

To bring up the horses, that were still tethered in various parts, took Claymour and Thornleigh some time; but, there being no further delay, the four remaining tourists were soon in the saddle, and were off on a trot, following rapidly in the wake of the others.

"There has been no roll-call," suggested Thornleigh to Claymour, as he and Julia Mays rode briskly on, just ahead of Lottie and her

escort; "but I suppose there can be no doubt that we are all mounted and 'en route' for the encampment."

Paxton turned in his saddle, even as he pressed forward, scanning anxiously the portion of the plateau open to their view. There was absolutely nothing living in sight. "The roll-call should not have been omitted," he said. "Still, I think none of the party would be straggling out of sound of the recall-whistle, and all must have seen the storm approaching."

"Don't you think we had better ride back?" suggested Julia. "What if some member of the party is left up there on the cliff all night?"

"By the time we could ride back there now," said Paxton, decidedly, "nothing would be visible ten feet off. As you see, the clouds have not only spread over the cliff, but are bound to catch us in the race, if we do not get on as fast as possible."

"Dear, dear!" lamented Miss Mays, in a really anxious tone, "I wish we had been more careful. Do you know, those girls, who went down the other side of the cone to gather rhododendrons and wild gooseberries, came running back, just as we were ready to start, and reported, in the greatest state of excitement, that they had seen bear-tracks around a pool in the gorge."

Thornleigh laughed.

"I think that fact may give us the assurance that all the young ladies, at least, have made tracks themselves into a place of safety. No doubt the tracks they saw about the pool were those of the mythical Bruin which Miss Lottie tried to interview last night."

Had Thornleigh glanced back, he would have seen that Miss Saunders and Paxton both received this rally with ominous gravity.

"Ride on faster, Miss Julia, you and Thornleigh, please," Claymour called, making himself heard with difficulty above the increasing roar of the tempest. "We ought to overtake the others, and settle this matter. I am like Miss Julia: I would not fancy leaving even a gentleman of our party to spend a night in this storm, and with bears all about." This last, however, was addressed in a lower tone to Lottie.

"Hush!" suddenly cried Miss Saunders, bringing her horse to a halt, a few minutes later.

"What is it, Lottie?" her lover asked, anxiously.

"It was a foolish fancy, maybe; but I was certain that I heard a cry—a loud call or shriek; and, if it was, it could not have been far from here."

"It was only the wind in the pine-tops, dear. Don't stop. Let's hurry on. We can do no more than take care of ourselves, now."

They were hardly able, in truth, to do even the last: for the tempest was thickening down the mountain-sides, ahead of them; and the obscurity was such, that Thornleigh and Julia, at less than thirty paces distant, were almost lost to sight.

Of the other members of their company, they had seen nothing, meantime. Two of the worst dangers they had to contend with was the murkiness, in which the ill-defined path was likely to be lost, and the driving sleet, with which the air was full, and which would speedily render the rugged way more slippery and dangerous than ever.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. CHANTREY herself had led the van of her flying forces. But, to do her justice, it must be explained that, in taking the lead, she had but yielded to the anxious entreaties of her husband, who knew enough of the swiftness and raging violence of such storms to be certain that her surest chance for safety, as well as for the safety of those who were ready to accompany her, was in an immediate flight from the exposed summit to the more sheltered plateau where their camp was.

She had waited, therefore, only long enough to see her party reassemble, and to be assured that the last stragglers were in sight. Leaving word for these to follow as fast as possible, she had then started off, accompanied by her husband and four or five others, including timid little Lavlette Gratz, under the special care of Lansing Saunders. This advanced guard had regained the camp, and were safely housed in their tents, before the storm swooped upon them. One by one, the rest, bedraggled and wayworn, arrived, with the exception of three couples.

"There are only Judith, Julia, Lottie, Mark Slidell, Claymour, and Dwyer Thornleigh to come in now," said Mistress Kate, "and the last three have been through these dreadful mountain-passes before. Has anyone seen Miss Yodell?"

Ronwick and Campbell, who had just arrived, with Melicent and Isobel, exchanged glances of significance, but discreetly said nothing. A few minutes afterwards, however, they went out to see if the tardy stragglers were yet in sight.

"Wasn't she under Slidell's charge?"

"Yes; but she and Lansing Saunders, when they all got to the Lashorns, went off to one of them, and Slidell took offense, and said he would ride down the mountain to old Waters's rancho. I did my best to dissuade him, but I think he expected to get back in time to come with her to camp."

"And, when Saunders and she came down from the Lashorns, he joined Lavlette Gratz?"

"Yes; but the girls were all together, and went off for rhododendrons. It is inexplicable how she got separated from them. But everyone ran for herself, I suppose, when the storm came up so suddenly."

"He will feel badly when he hears that she was obliged to make her way back, without any special escort, through this storm."

"Yes, for it's no child's-play: especially now, with night coming on."

"Perhaps Miss Yodell waited, expecting Slidell; and so has had to come on with Miss Lottie and Claymour, or with Miss Julia and Thornleigh."

"Well, I can't help but feel troubled, though I don't see that we can mend matters by standing out here. The sleet, changing to this fine driving snow, obscures the mountain so much that we could not see an army approaching. Let us go in. We shall only excite Mrs. Chantrey's suspicions."

To them, and to the rest of the party, the hours that followed were a prolonged suspense. Crouched together underneath the quivering canvas, they thought but little of their own discomfort. The arrival of Miss Mays and Thornleigh gave them, for awhile, a gleam of hope. Miss Mays's description of the perils they had encountered, however, reawakened the anxiety of all, especially when she asked if anybody had seen or heard of Miss Yodell.

"Judith?" cried Mistress Kate. "Is she not behind, with Mr. Claymour and Lottie?"

What was her dismay to hear the truth! Nor did it require much investigation to reveal the significant and terribly suggestive fact, that nobody else had seen Miss Yodell since the girls who had been gathering flowers with her, down the ridge, had fled back to the summit, frightened by the fresh trackings of a bear about a cascade pool. "We left her there," said Miss Lavlette, "and, now I think of it, none of us has seen her since." Whilst the horror of this discovery was at its height, it was intensified by the arrival of Lottie and Claymour without the missing girl, or without the least knowledge of her fate.

There now remained not the shadow of a hope that she would, for that night at least, be able to make her way back to the camp. The storm had only slightly abated; the roads were simply impassable. The darkness was so Cimmerian that any party sent in search of her would have small chance to find its way, and would itself risk being lost. But, in spite of the folly of the enterprise, Saunders, Paxton, and Thornleigh immediately declared their intention of working their way back to the summit, and down to the cliff where she had last been seen. The venture, as all realized, was full of danger, yet none had the heart, not even Lottie, to offer a word of protest.

Equipped with lanterns and guns, the three set forth. The blackness soon swallowed them up. The others were left, forlorn enough, to watch and wait, through hours of agonized suspense, for their return, or for tidings from them.

But what really had become of Miss Yodell? Was she still alive, or had she already fallen a prey to the tempest? Let us explain.

On the ascent to the Lashorn summit, in the morning, Mark Slidell had spoken to her of the wonderfully beautiful varieties of the rhododendron on the cliffs and ridges there, and had promised to show her where she could secure some fine specimens of the foliage, though, at that late season, there was small chance, he said, of finding any blossoms. It was, unluckily, quite late in the afternoon, when Miss Yodell descended from her chat with Saunders in the Lashorn, to inquire for Mark, and claim from him the fulfillment of his promise. But Slidell had departed, by this time, in a fit of chagrin, as we already know: he would certainly be back in time, however, to go with them to camp, Lettie Mays told Judith. At the same time, she offered to take Mark's place, to show where the rhododendrons grew. Melicent, Lavlette, and Minnie agreed to accompany them. So the five girls had slipped away, laughingly refusing to have any gentlemen with them, "to criticize any awkward climbing," they said, "they might be guilty of." This much, as we have seen, Campbell knew, and had already told the others. What he did not know was what had followed.

Had the girls been content with culling what they found on the open cliff, all would have been well. But, unfortunately, Lettie Mays remembered that, in a densely-grown and shaded gorge, through which the mountain-stream flowed downward to the valley of the Laurel, there were oft-times beautiful rhododendrons and tiger-lilies to be found, even as late in the season as this. They had reached the gorge, and were gathering the tiger-lilies, when Lavlette uttered a sharp

cry, pointing at the moist loamy soil of the ledge about the pool.

About this pool, huge tracks, as of some wild animal, were deeply imprinted.

"Heaven's mercy! they are bear-tracks, and fresh at that," cried Lettie Mays, giving a single glance, and bounding off up the cliff. "Come, girls," she cried, not even glancing back, "it must be close by. Don't stop for anything."

There was no idle tarrying on the part of the bravest, as may be believed. There was no time even for speech. With tired limbs, scratched hands, and panting breath, the fugitives had just regained the ridge, when the shrill repeated whistle, which Claymour had so tardily sounded, came ringing across the distance. Seeing, at the same time, the advancing storm, and instantly realizing their peril, the girls had hurried to the place of rendezvous, and, in the confusion of mounting, had no time or opportunity to notice that one of their number was missing.

Miss Yodell had been as prompt as any, however, in starting to re-climb the rugged cliffs; but she was lower down than the others, and she had retreated but a step or two when the wind caught in the folds of her veil and tossed it aside into a clump of tiger-lilies. The veil hung fluttering in full view. Miss Yodell, with the prospect of the exposed ride down the mountain, did not fancy losing the veil. It would take but a moment, she thought, for its recovery. She was in the very act of seizing it when a second gust of wind, heralding the rising storm, whirled the gauze a bit further on, landing it now in a cluster of mammoth ferns growing out upon a ledge of moss-cushioned rock—which was, in truth, a shelf-like projection of the precipitous wall that bordered one side of the cascade gorge. Again she was tempted to regain it. As she stepped upon the ledge, she could hear, from the depths below, the hoarse hollow roar of the waters, falling over into the dense shadows, into which she dared not look. She was, however, more successful, this second time, in recovering her property. She turned about now to retrace her steps, and was in the act of regaining the broader ledge which formed the cascade basin, when, to her horror, she saw, on the hither side of the pool, and reflected in its densely-shadowed waters, a great shaggy black and red-brown bear, his small gleaming eyes fastened full upon her.

Huge as he was, ferocious as he would no doubt prove himself to be when occasion served, he was, for a moment, as much surprised at seeing Miss Yodell as Miss Yodell was at seeing him. He had been, from his earliest recollec-

tion, a dozen of these savage solitudes, and had never before happened upon a young lady of the nineteenth century—handsome, stylish, with white hands and richly-jeweled fingers—unless, indeed, as was more than likely, he was the one who had inquisitively looked down upon Miss Saunders, the night before. Certain it was, that, if Miss Yodell at that moment had braved him with a defiant shout, he might have fled, demoralized. But, though she uttered a cry, it was not one of defiance; and, worse and worse, she showed her fear, not only by her tone, but by retreating along the ledge. Circling clumsily, yet quickly enough, about the further edge of the pool, the bear advanced as she retreated, swinging his ponderous bulk along from side to side, his deliberate pace quickening as he saw her moving still further back along the ledge.

CHAPTER VII.

EVIDENTLY the instinct of hunger was now suggesting to the sluggish brain of the brute that here was a sweet and delicate morsel to roll under his tongue. Miss Yodell realized this, and her only hope was that he would not venture much further: for the shelving rock was narrowing perceptibly, and would soon be too narrow to traverse. Not many paces distant, it made an abrupt bend. Uncertain whether, beyond this curve, she would find a blank wall of rock, or a still narrower support for her feet, or a sheer descent into space, she nevertheless fled on. The bear lumbered after her, with his lolling tongue, yet nimble enough, sniffing at her small footprints in the moss carpeting. And now—great heavens!—she could almost feel his hot breath.

"Oh, if the shelf would only narrow," she thought, "until I could find no more than a support for my toes." The bear could not reach her then; and so she could manage to cling to the rocks and roots until help should come. Even if her strength should fail—if she should lose her grasp, and drop down, down!—why, even that would be preferable to the rending and tearing of those great teeth and claws. But, though the path grew more shelving, it kept as wide as ever, and the now excited beast pursued as rapidly as she fled.

At last she reached the point where the wall of rock jutted sharply out. Here the path narrowed, sloping abruptly downward in a treacherous, because crumbling, intermixture of slate, loam, and other untenable supports. Her only chance of escape lay in this direction. Fortunately, there were pine-shrubs and rocks to cling to, if she slipped and fell. Still, she

could but pause for a moment before trusting herself to the chances of what might befall her when she left the solid foothold for the uncertainties of the other side. Yet the venture must be made. Her pursuer was but a few feet behind. She fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the swaying pines and sparse growths ahead, and, reaching forward to grasp whatever root or shrub might promise to afford her support, she dragged herself along to the bend of the jagged projection. Here, gripping a tenacious clump of pine-shoots, she clung to it as with the energy of despair. The shrub shook under her weight; but suddenly, out from its clustering boughs, leaped a small striped squirrel, which had possibly sought shelter there from the gathering tempest.

The startled creature dropped to the ledge almost at her feet, and, in a twinkling, had darted from sight along the very course she had been afraid to try.

The sight filled her bosom with a divine hope.

"Surely," she thought, "the hand of heaven is in this; a way of escape has opened for me."

With sudden faith, a prayer on her lips, and renewed strength in her grasp, she swung herself around the bend, feeling, with both foot and hand, for the supports she must secure.

To her surprise, she found them both at once: for this sharp corner formed an acute angle, and there was a path—and, fortunately, a narrow one—beyond.

Glancing back over her shoulder, she could see that the bear had stopped, finding the path too narrow for himself, and had risen on his haunches, showing his teeth in an angry growl. Shutting her eyes tightly, and commending herself again to the watchful care of Him who had guided the squirrel in his flight, she rested her weight on the hither side of the bend, and, with a mighty effort, drew herself forward, and, a moment later, was on a wider path and on solid ground. It was impossible for the bear to follow.

She did not, however, stop a moment. From around the corner, behind, she could hear the savage growlings of the brute, whose pursuit of her, though interrupted for a time, was liable to be resumed any instant. Once, she caught sight of a huge black foot, with extended claws, thrust around the bend, and of a black nose also protruded beyond the jutting rock. What if, after all, the brute should succeed in getting around the corner? She gave a quick cry of renewed terror at this thought, and began her hurried descent: taking small care, as may be imagined, by what slidings or tumbings she gained the bottom. Sharp stones cut her feet, even through the substantial kids of her riding-

boots; her riding-habit was torn by thorns and briars; the brim of her hat was frayed by the branches of the pines, dogwood, and wild-cucumber trees through which she pushed her way; her hands were cut and bleeding; and her long hair had come unbound, and was hanging in tangled waves and curls, every pin and comb being gone; and all this long before the descent was finished.

The storm, meantime, increased in violence, dense clouds enveloping and obscuring every object; the half-frozen dashes of rain blinded her with their furious assaults; she was driven, now here, now there; she was bruised, buffeted, almost worn out. Yet, realizing that her rescue must depend upon her own efforts entirely, and that there could be no search for her whilst that tempest was abroad in the mountains, she pushed on, regardless of all these discomforts and obstacles, and so at last reached the foot of the declivity. For a single second, after she stood on the firm ground below, she looked up and back. "Oh," she cried, clasping her hands, "will anyone ever dream that I dared that impassable gulf?" Would it not be concluded that she had become the prey either of the bear or of the yawning gulf?

She now made an effort to shape her course in the direction of the camp. She could do no more, however, than to turn always to the left, having no means of determining the points of the compass, or the distance she had traversed. The way still led downward again, though not so steeply, and, after a long time, she was forced to believe that she had got below where her party had encamped. But, in the face of the driving sleet and the wild winds, she could not think of attempting to return. The ravine into which she was descending seemed to be somewhat sheltered from the force of the storm; but the jungles of laurel were beginning to hedge her descent with new difficulties. Besides, as she well knew, in addition to being the haunts of rattlesnakes, these thickets afforded lairs for the bears, wolves, and catamounts still left in this portion of the Appalachian range. Had she escaped one raging beast only to fall a prey to another? Or what if, in these jungles, she lost her way? She had heard more than one legend of hunters who had done it, only to circle about, in the mazes of foliage, for days and days, till released by some happy chance, or starved to death.

Suddenly she remembered that Mark had told her that the wildernesses of laurel grew thicker near the base of the mountain. Judging by these indications, she felt convinced that she

must be there, or nearly there, now. Cautiously, and now with something of hope, she worked her way on, when, on turning a corner, to her great amazement, she came upon what appeared to be a clearing, extending across the ravine into which she had entered.

As well as she could judge, in the gathering darkness, the clearing was neither small nor barren, showing that, at last, she was approaching civilization.

A short distance further, she came upon a bold beautiful spring, and near by was a small and rude, but substantially-constructed, spring-house.

Surely, a palace of magic could not have appeared fairer in the eyes of Miss Yodell, accustomed though she had been always to the refinements and luxuries of life. It was a sure sign of human help and of a human habitation somewhere nigh at hand.

Tottering, not only from fatigue, but also from nervous exhaustion, as she had been a moment before, she felt suddenly inspired now by a new vigor, and pressed on as eagerly as her really exhausted physical strength would allow. Pretty soon, she came upon a high palisade fence, evidently enclosing a considerable plot of cultivated ground. Doubtless, also, within it, was the habitation she hoped to find.

The fence was close as well as high, and the palisades were pointed sabre-like, as if to protect from the incursions of wild beasts; but a brief search discovered a gate, with its latch-string hospitably fluttering within her reach, and, yielding to the pull, the gate swung round upon its stout wooden pivot. Miss Yodell slipped in, turned the gate quickly into place, and, catching her breath with an aspiration of thanksgiving, looked around for the house.

Certainly, the palace of the Russian Czarina had never appeared the abode of such peace or safety as the rudely-constructed cabin of logs, which she now dimly saw rising out of the murkiness in front. As she approached the building, she beheld, through the chinks of its heavy windows and door, the glow of the fire-light within, while from the low chimney of stones and logs a volume of smoke was issuing, suggestive of warmth and cosiness—oh, in such contrast to the night without.

Miss Yodell had to knock upon the door twice or thrice, however, before she attracted attention. The blasts, still sweeping by, seemed to mock her feeble strokes. Evidently she was unheard by the occupant or occupants of the cabin. In the darkness, she felt about, therefore, for the latch-string, feeling confident she would find one, and remembering gratefully Mark Siddell's

reference that very day to the latch-string of the mountaineer, which he had affirmed was as inevitable a testimony of the squatter's hospitality as was the bed of bear-skins he was always ready to spread for one, in front of his fire.

Yes, here was the latch-string. Therefore, this mountaineer must be a hospitable man. She pulled the string with a quick nervous jerk. The wind, at this crisis, too, aided her. It pushed open the door, as it were, for her, and, rushing ahead, roared up the chimney, swirling the flames, and dancing about in the great open fireplace, where a glorious log-heap was sending forth its cheery heat, lighting the rough walls of the cabin, the smoked ceiling, the hunter's implements, and all the rude furnishings of a squatter's home.

It lighted up, too, the individual who was the solitary inmate of the dwelling, and who was at that moment engaged in the important duty of frying savory bits of meat, and baking ash-cakes, for his supper.

A more appetizing fragrance than that diffused through the cabin from this primitive cooking, Miss Yodell had certainly never inhaled. At a glance, she saw that this person, who was to be her host, was of goodly proportions, and was habited in the rough garb suited to the mountains. Just then, she could tell nothing further about him: for, at the moment of her entrance, he was stooping to rake open a bed of coals, for the purpose of depositing within the rosy hollow the flattened cake of corn-dough which he held on his hand. On one side, the meat was cooking and sputtering in its own fat in the frying-pan.

"Hello!" cried our engrossed cook, without glancing around. "Come in, quick, and shut the door. It's high time, I think, that you fellows were coming back. I waited till my appetite would hold out no longer. No doubt you'll be thankful enough for the hot supper I'm getting for you. But shut the door, I say. The ashes are blowing in my eyes, as well as in the meat."

Judith pushed the door to, as she was bidden. The heavy boards clicked into their fastenings. She had battled against the force of the wind with fictitious strength: for her pulses had almost stopped at the sound of the speaker's voice. What was there in the tones, which woke in her bosom a thousand conflicting emotions and memories?

"Whew!" cried the voice again, while its owner performed some queer antics on the broad hearth of stone. "Ghost of Farinata! if these flames are not baking and broiling me! Come here, Chisholm, and help me with this confounded ash-cake. It's all in a lump. No, here goes.

There: she's all straight and covered up, snug enough. This, you must be frozen, tongue and all; why don't you speak? I suppose you didn't get that wretched beast of a bear, after all, and are cross about it. And, Chisholm," turning around at last, from heaping ashes over his buried treasure, and addressing the supposed Chisholm, in a tone of peculiar earnestness, "what about those people at the encampment? Did you see—hello! where's old man Waters? Heavens! are you hurt, man?"

For, in the flickering of the firelight, he had but an imperfect view of the figure that now leaned heavily against the lintel of the door. Besides, standing as he was, on the hearthstone, his own shadow was falling darkly upon Judith, who had shrunk back from the sound of his voice. He advanced, his quick strides showing his alarm. As he left the hearth, the firelight flashed upon her, and she lifted herself proudly, standing before him, with her arms dropped at her sides, a jaded, forlorn, tattered semblance of the stylish Miss Yodell, of Kentucky, yet with an air of proud reserve, of resolute hauteur, in the carriage of her head and shoulders, and in the rain-washed face, which he recognized in a flash.

"Judith—Miss Yodell!" he cried, in amazement, rooted to the spot.

"Hart Branthwaite," she said, "I did not—did not know—I did not dream—"

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS YODELL'S voice was the first to break the spell that, for a moment or two, now held them both in thrall.

"Again I say," were her words, "that I did not know you were here. I have been lost on the mountain."

But he had not needed this to see what her face had already betrayed: that his presence was as unwelcome as it was unexpected.

"I understand, Judith," he answered, promptly, yet looking as despairingly miserable as if the flame of Eblis had been kindled in his breast, instead of the warmth and glow of love and pity that had pervaded his whole being at sight of the graceful form and fair face, which had haunted his waking and sleeping dreams since last he had seen her, twelve months before; "it must be, I feel, only a miserable mischance that thrusts you into my presence like this; but, child, child," the yearning of his heart finding expression in the plying tenderness of his tone, "how did you happen here at this hour, and in this plight? You are worn—spent as though there were no strength even for the repugnance with which you shrink from this momentary encounter with me.

You are so broken in body that you feel neither the bitterness of resentment nor the pain there is in remembrance. Let me shelter and care for you this time, though on the morrow our paths again divide."

He had moved closer to her: for he saw, while her hand rested against the lintel for support, that her form was awaying like a reed broken by the wind. The next instant she fell, half senseless, into his outstretched arms.

"Judith! Great heavens! has she come to me only to die?" he cried, in tones of agony.

In her utter exhaustion, Miss Yodell could only lie passive in his arms, as he lifted and carried her to the rug of wolf-skins, spread in front of the glowing fire. Laying her down, he began a vigorous application of every restorative within his reach: chafing her hands and face, and her white, white—but, alas! feebly pulsating—throat; even pouring a stimulant through the colorless lips, over which the breath was passing in broken gasps, that terrified Branthwaite more than any other indication of her prostration. She was not at any time unconscious, but just too tired, too exhausted in strength, to do more than second his efforts by a passive endurance. Luckily, in a moment of inspiration, he bethought him to empty the jug of stimulant over the cuirass of Miss Yodell's habit, thus converting the saturated cloth into a genuine steam-bath, as he folded closely about her one or more of the wolf-ropes, heated before the fire to a degree that, sooner or later, was bound to warm the chilled heart of his patient.

As he resorted to this novel expedient, Miss Yodell smiled up at him.

That little smile—ending, though it did, in a weary broken sigh and a closing of her dark eyes, which had been following his every movement with a strained anxious look—went to his heart. She did not, then, utterly reject his care, he said to himself. And now, on his knees beside her, he bent over till his mustached lips almost touched the pallid forehead.

"Judith," he whispered—and, if she had felt anything, she must have felt his eager breath upon her wan cheek and brow—"dear, speak to me once, if but to tell me that you will live! Oh, my darling, I can hear you, if you but *think* you can care to live, because I wish for it so."

But she did not speak. She did not hear. She did not think, one way or the other. The fact was, exhausted nature had overcome her: she had fallen asleep.

Man-like, Branthwaite felt chagrined, when he realized that he had been pouring his ardent entreaties into unhearing ears. He got up from

his knees, and threw himself into a rude arm-chair, but cushioned with fox and 'coon skins, and so a luxury not to be despised. Here he sat for awhile, resolutely fixing his eyes upon the flames in the fireplace, and as resolutely avoiding a sight of the white peaceful face, which, sleeping or waking, would, he believed, mock all his entreaties, all his love, with its indifferent calm.

"I thought she might possibly have cared for me still," he soliloquized; "but no. The wolf-skin, that has restored warmth and comfort to her half-frozen body, is more to her than I, her still abject slave. Her judgment of me is unjust, and will always be unjust, because it has in it nothing of the charity which is of love."

He champed the ends of his mustache viciously, and for awhile sat gloomily regarding her. But she slept so long that he began at last to fear she might not wake before the return of his companions. Was he, then, to miss this opportunity—for which he had been so long craving—for a few words of explanation? Yet, after all, what would it avail him? She was unforgiving. She had condemned him without a hearing. She had refused to see him—to read his letters, even. She judged him, without a knowledge of either his actions or his motives. Would she be apt to put a kindlier interpretation now upon his conduct? Would not discussing it seem like forcing upon her a hearing of his cause, when she was powerless to resist? Would that be chivalrous? Would it be even manly?

But how death-like was that sleep! Poor storm-beaten child! Creeping almost stealthily to her side, he bent down to look at her. Not a quiver was there of eyelash or eyelid. Not a tremor of the sweet mouth, that had now a down-droop that was the more pitiful from being unfamiliar to him. His own pulses seemed to stand still as he looked. What if that blue weary circle about the closed eyes was the shadow of death? What if the vital forces were giving way? What if this sleep was but the beginning of the end? By what ill-chance had she been left astray, to be done to death after this pitiless fashion?

The storm without had lulled, but the winds were still howling like wild beasts defrauded of their prey. Within, the fire was sending its blaze roaring up the chimney, and emitting sharp crackling sounds at intervals, that made the silence of the room at other times all the more profound.

Stooping lower, to hear the faint breathing of the sleeper, Branthwaite could perceive the steam arising from the soaked clothing.

"Ah," he said, joyfully, "it is not death. She

will be all right: it is only the steam-bath that is affecting her thus." And, exulting in this new conviction, he added: "But her face is scorching."

He looked around, to find something out of which to construct a screen. One corner of the cabin was partitioned off, to make a closet. Hoping here to discover something suitable for his purpose, he opened it. To his surprise, he found it chiefly filled with feminine garments, depending from rude wooden pegs driven into the logs. The sight both astonished and perplexed Branthwaite.

"They cannot be the clothes of Waters's wife or daughter," he said, puzzled: "for he told Chisholm and myself, last night, that he had never been married."

All at once, there flashed upon him that he had heard a story, which the kindly-hearted half-breed had told them, how that his Huguenot father had loved a beautiful Indian girl, and, in spite of his culture and fine French breeding, had cherished his lovely—if half-civilized—bride, till death had robbed him of her, and then had fled back to Europe, leaving his motherless boy to the charities of the fast-diminishing tribe of red-men whom his mother had deserted for the love she bore the paleface.

"So these are her treasured garments, which the son has kept?" murmured Branthwaite, touching reverently one of the bright-hued dresses. "Illiterate as he is, and rude as his mode of living may be, Wilburn Waters is faithful to this pure memory. But, sacredly as he

cherishes these relics, I feel sure the old man will approve when he learns how a helpless girl found, not only shelter and food, but clothing, under his roof."

Delicately leaving to Miss Yodell a further inspection of his opportune discovery, he took some papers from a file against the wall, and, in a brief while, had improvised an efficient screen for her face. Evidently this was done none too soon: for the pale cheeks, under the fervent heat of the fire, were beginning to take a tinge of feverish red. Once or twice, too, Judith had stirred, and tried instinctively to turn her face away. In fact, while Branthwaite was arranging the screen for her, she gave a short quick sigh, as of relief, and settled her graceful head back, whilst a glimmering smile raised the drooped corners of her mouth and parted the lips, into which a healthy color was beginning to steal once more.

The sight of this smile brought more kindly thoughts to him. He began to think of the past and of their last meeting. Before his memory, in kaleidoscopic alternations of shadow and brightness, passed the brilliant scenes of the ball-room in Kentucky, in which he had experienced the keenest pangs of jealousy and of despair—where he had been raised from depths of misery to supremest bliss—and from which he had gone forth, never, he had once thought, never to see her again.

"But she is here now," he said. "I see the hand of Providence in it. Oh, if she will only give me a chance to speak."

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

WHEN DID UNCLE PHILBROKE DIE?

BY CHARLES RICHARDS DODGE,
AUTHOR OF "A SHADOW LOVE," "LOUISE AND I," "A QUAIN
T LITTLE MAID," AND OTHER STORIES.

THAT was the burning question which kept me in a state of feverish anxiety for three months, during a certain youthful period of my career—a question, the answer to which, when it finally came, nearly breaking my heart. But why anticipate?

I had never seen my Uncle Philbroke York, for he lived in England, and I was born in America. To be truthful, I may add that I had never entertained the slightest wish to see Uncle Philbroke, knowing him only as a miserly old fellow living across the water, who chanced to be my father's elder brother. In due course of events, however, he died—under very distressing circumstances, to be sure; and, had it not been for a rather interesting clause in his will, I should probably have passed the occurrence by, at the time, with a few words of regret at so tragic a taking-off, but with no great depth of sorrow.

Do not think me heartless, in making so frank an avowal of a lack of feeling; for, it must be remembered, I had never seen my uncle, and, between my father and his brother, but few letters had passed in all the years that my father had lived in America. Of Aunt York, less even was known; for she became Mrs. Philbroke York about three years after my father quitted England, and, previous to that event, he had neither seen nor known her or her family.

From long habit of business thrift, coupled with extreme penuriousness, Uncle Philbroke was very rich; and having no children, and being so much older than his wife, it was taken for granted by our family that, in the event of his decease, he would leave considerable money to my aunt. That was the fact in the case, as I one day learned, though the matter was brought to my understanding in rather a startling manner.

To go back a little in my narrative: By a strange fatality, father was taken dangerously ill about two weeks before the death of my uncle, his malady terminating fatally

in just three days from the beginning of the attack. Under such a weight of personal bereavement, therefore, it may be readily understood that the circumstance of Uncle York's death was soon lost sight of, not only by myself, but by my mother and sister. The announcement of his demise came to us in the form of a marked newspaper, in which also appeared a brief statement that he had been the victim of a steamboat-disaster.

One evening, as I returned from the office—for I earned a fair salary as a book-keeper in a commercial house—mother greeted me at the door of the sitting-room with a long blue envelope bearing a foreign stamp and postmark. It was addressed to my father, and, upon taking out the enclosure—my mother had broken the seal before I came in—I read these words:

"DEAR SIR: You have doubtless, ere this, been made aware of the death of your only brother, Philbroke York, Esq., of Pottingham Corners, Elton, who was fatally injured by a boiler-explosion while traveling, his wife dying at very nearly the same hour, though in a different place. By a clause in your late brother's will, should his death occur after that of his wife, you would be his sole heir. On the other hand, Mrs. York has left a will bequeathing her entire fortune to her surviving relatives, which of course would include her husband's fortune should she survive him, as he leaves everything to her. As it is a matter of considerable doubt at the present time whether your brother survived his wife, or your sister-in-law outlived her husband, it would be well for you to come to England at once, pending a settlement of the question.

"In case this is impossible, however, if you will give us power-of-attorney, we will be happy to look after your interests in the best manner possible, and will be pleased to subscribe ourselves, respectfully, your attorneys,
HATFIELD & HALFORD.

To ARCHIBALD YORK, Esq."

In a postscript to the letter, I learned that, in the event of Archibald York (my father) having departed this life, by a codicil to the will, my uncle had bequeathed his property to his "beloved nephew, Bradford York," under the conditions previously stated—namely, his survival of the wife. In short, I was that beloved nephew, and, as a possible heir to an uncle's thousands, perhaps millions, I provided myself with necessary papers of identification, and, with a sum of money representing half of my savings for three years, I sailed on the very next steamer for England.

I will not take time here to narrate all that transpired in the next two months. Messrs. Hatfield & Halford certainly used their utmost endeavors to bring light out of the darkness which seemed to enshroud my uncle's death, but without avail.

Meanwhile, I endeavored to hunt up some of my relatives—distant ones, to be sure—and was so far successful that, in a week or two, I found a cousin of my father's, who welcomed me warmly. He had two grown daughters, quite pretty girls, though rather too quiet and childlike, I thought, to be very companionable from the American standpoint. To speak plainly, they absolutely did not know how to flirt, and could not converse.

I continued to visit at the house, however, for I frequently met there a friend to these two young ladies, a sweet-faced girl of eighteen or twenty, who was not only able to converse, and to converse well, but, if she knew nothing of the science of flirting, looked at me out of her brown eyes so innocently, and yet in so dangerously fascinating a manner, that I soon began to have misgivings as to my own powers of resistance.

She professed a deep interest in America, and never wearied of my commonplace descriptions of people and customs in the land of my nativity. I professed a sincere love for American institutions, and frequently spoke with such warmth that the girl seemed to be carried away upon the tide of my enthusiasm. Then her eye would beam so sympathetically into mine, that I often forgot there were others in the room, and directed the chief part of my conversation to her alone.

So it came about that I fell desperately in love with pretty Mary Clement, and, before

six weeks had passed, found myself seriously considering the idea of taking her back to America with me, when—yes, when I had settled beyond any doubt the point that Aunt Margaret had kindly breathed her last a few moments before Uncle Philbroke. I felt it would be an easy conquest, and, with a fortune to lay at her feet, doubly so.

But, if I had made good headway in an entanglement of the affections during this time, I made none whatever in disentangling the muddle which had called me to England. This much, and no more, was known: My aunt, who was in delicate health, being a sufferer from heart-disease, experienced such a shock upon receiving intelligence of the deplorable accident, knowing that her husband could not live, that she was immediately prostrated, and breathed her last quietly in the presence of a sister and other members of the household, at precisely five minutes past three, this point being proved without a shadow of doubt. Uncle Philbroke, on the contrary, had been so terribly injured that the surgeons declared he would not survive the journey to the hospital, and he was therefore made as comfortable as possible at the steamboat-landing whither the disabled vessel had been towed, his death being momentarily expected. He had lived, however, several hours, his death occurring, as nearly as could be ascertained, somewhere near three o'clock in the afternoon.

Mrs. Dunbarton and her sister, Miss Mills, only surviving relatives (sisters) of Margaret York, who represented the other side of this pretty muddle in which an unfortunate boiler-explosion had involved me, had been very persistent in their efforts to prove that the wife outlived the husband, and certainly the indications seemed to prove the correctness of the theory.

One morning, Mr. Halford sent for me, and, in the course of our conversation, asked me point-blank if, since coming to England, I had met anyone by the name of Clement. I felt my cheeks flush at the direct question, but, before I could answer, he added: "There is a certain Dr. Robert Clement, who is believed to have been near your uncle at the moment of his death. There were two or three other witnesses also, who have not yet been examined, because we cannot obtain even a clue to their identity, through the offer of rewards or by other means. It has

been hinted that they are kept out of the way; as their testimony is important, however, we shall make every effort to find them."

So I went back to my cousins and to Mary Clement, toward whom, somehow, I felt myself more than ever drawn, as I realized that she might be a relative to Dr. Clement, and was possibly my enemy. More than once, I found myself upon the point of questioning her; but, like a coward, I held my peace, because I did not dare think of the possibility of bringing the present delightful experience to a close. I had been told by my cousins that her home was in London, but that she was visiting among her father's relatives in the neighborhood. I now learned it from her own lips, and with it the unwelcome information that she was to return to the city in a very few days.

By this time, we had become more than good friends, and so it came about that on the last day but one, of her visit, I forgot everything but my love for her, and offered her then and there my heart and prospective fortune; for I felt sure of making one, sometime, in America, by hard work, even if I did not secure one in England by inheritance.

Evidently she was wholly unprepared for my declaration, yet, from several little things, I judged that the proposition was not altogether distasteful to her. Then I grew bolder and resorted to entreaty, begging her, with boyish fervor, for her answer. She talked with me for some time, in a kind of half-serious pleasantry, interposing all manner of ridiculous objections to that I was urging so persistently. Then, growing thoughtful and looking away from me so that I could not see her face, she told me that on many accounts she wished to say yes, but that there were reasons, hardly explainable at the present time, why we should not at once become engaged. On the other hand, she said she could not bear to say no, but, if I were willing to wait for her answer, perhaps it would someday be as I wished.

I was sorely disappointed, for the three months which she named seemed an age; and the little "if," which had so suddenly interposed itself in the way, appeared as a mountain to overshadow my affection. The next day, I bade her good-bye, and for a time she was lost to me.

Meanwhile, Hatfield & Halford left no stone unturned to discover the missing wit-

nesses to my uncle's death; they were working with a purpose, and in a few weeks were successful. Then a new complication arose. The statements of the two witnesses were found to vary widely, considering that the deaths of my uncle and aunt had been so nearly coincident. One swore that it was three o'clock, because he thought he heard six strokes of a ship's bell upon a vessel lying near; the other stated under oath that he looked at his watch only a minute or two before Mr. York breathed his last, and that it was ten minutes after three.

Mrs. Dunbarton's lawyer insisted that there was far more likelihood of the ship's bell having been struck on time, than that the watch of the deck-hand who helped move Mr. York after death was right. I more than half agreed with him, though kept my opinions to myself. The case was settled, however, in a day or two; for the officer was discovered who had removed the valuables from my uncle's person, for safe-keeping, as soon as life was extinct, and he swore positively that, when removing Mr. York's watch from his vest-pocket, he noted that it was exactly one minute past three. So I lost my fortune, and, what made it the harder to bear, upon returning home I found that my employers, after waiting a reasonable time, had given my place to another. For weeks I sought employment, without success. Life grew very dark to me then, and thoughts of Mary Clement only added to the depth of my despair, for, as she had not even replied to the letter I had written, telling her of my safe return, I felt that she too was against me. Then I made up my mind to leave home and friends, and seek employment in a distant city.

Here, amid new surroundings, a ray of sunshine at last came to me; for, after a time, I found a place in a large mercantile establishment, though the pay was so small that it seemed to me like beginning life anew. I determined to make the best of it, however, and had about settled down to work in earnest when I received the long-expected letter from Mary Clement. It ran as follows:

"DEAR BRADFORD: You doubtless have thought it very strange that your kind letter has remained so long unanswered. Yet I have thought of you every day since we parted, and would gladly have written you every day, could I have done so. My mother

was very angry when she learned who my American friend was, and forbade a continuance of the acquaintance. I could have told her sooner, had I wished to do so; and I admit I felt a certain prejudice, myself, when, early in our acquaintance, I became aware that you were my enemy. But it was too late then; and so, in obedience to my mother's wishes, I have not even written you, though I know it has given us both pain.

"This is my birthday, and, as I am now eighteen years of age, I am no longer a child, and have a right to choose for myself. It is the day, too, on which I promised to give you my answer. Do you think for one moment that I could say no? And now, dear, let me tell you who I am, for your cousins in England told you some pretty fibs when you were visiting them, hoping to spare you embarrassment. My father, John Clement, was the first husband of the present Mrs.

Dunbarton, her second husband also deceased. Consequently, my brother Robert and I are direct heirs to the fortune which might have been all yours, but which, I trust, someday you will have a share in. And I am glad things turned out as they did; for, had you gained two suits at the same time, people might have made very hateful remarks about me, which they cannot make about you, for you could not have known that I was a relative to your aunt," etc., etc.

That was several years ago. Mary Clement York is sitting near me as I write, for we have been married two years. As to the fortune, I do not wish for any part of it now, as I have a richer fortune in the love of my wife than one my uncle might have left me, even were it doubled in amount. Besides, with a fair income and a sensible woman to aid me with her good counsel, I am accumulating a fortune of my own.